

1975

# A study of social work intervention in the marital separation process.

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UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR  
THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

A STUDY OF SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION  
IN THE MARITAL SEPARATION PROCESS

by

Martin Ebertus den Haan

Mary Ellen Frederick

A thesis presented to the School of Social Work  
of the University of Windsor in  
partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the  
degree of Master  
of Social Work

August, 1975

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and

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## ABSTRACT

Based upon the assumption that marital separation can lead either to a successful resolution of chronic marital conflict or to an escalation of personal and familial turmoil, this study focused upon the theoretical orientations, practice methods, and attitudes of social workers involved in marital separation counselling. Concluding from a review of the literature that marital separation was a situational crisis with various phases of development, we, the authors, were interested in learning how established modes of social work intervention were utilized to facilitate its resolution. This interest was heightened by the review of various studies which alluded to discrepancies in effectiveness of social work intervention, depending upon the social, educational, and economic class of the client involved.

Our research design was an exploratory descriptive one, using a questionnaire to solicit specific and general information from 94 social workers practicing in Windsor's Family Service Bureaus, Welfare Agencies, Children's Aid Societies, and Hospitals.

Of the social workers who were contacted, 71.3 percent responded. The data which their questionnaires offered indicated that the crisis intervention, problem solving, and client centered models of intervention were used most



frequently and that a large majority of the respondents (76.1 per cent) saw the husband and wife together before the decision to separate was made. Only 15.2 per cent saw the wife alone while no respondents saw the husband alone.

Social work intervention before the act of marital separation focused on assessment of the dysfunctional marital relationship, attempts at reconciliation, expression of emotional turmoil, and use of resources to alleviate distress.

Social work intervention during the act and after the act of separation focused on resolution of emotional turmoil, performance of concrete tasks (e.g. housekeeping, visiting rights, social interaction), and the development of a self-sustaining life style. A large majority of the respondents (87 per cent) believed that the marital couple only should take the responsibility of deciding to separate. Of the respondents, 85 per cent stated that only the wife remained in counselling after the decision to separate had been made. The respondents placed major emphasis on the stress involved in marital separation, the difficulty in separating the conjugal role from the parental role, the lack of emphasis in social work education on the needs of separating spouses, and the lack of societal mechanisms, responses, or rituals to deal humanely with divorce.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . . . .	ii
ABSTRACT . . . . .	iii
LIST OF TABLES . . . . .	vii
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION. . . . .	1
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE. . . . .	6
Changing Trends in Marriage and Family Life . . . . .	6
Industrialization . . . . .	7
Urbanization. . . . .	9
Individualization . . . . .	10
General Characteristics of the Canadian Family Today . . . . .	12
The Stability of the Family Institution . . . . .	13
Sociological and Psychological Factors Contributing to Marital Breakdown . . . . .	14
Sociological Studies. . . . .	14
Psychological Studies . . . . .	20
The Separation Process. . . . .	23
Crisis Theory and the Separation Process . . . . .	25
Aspects of the Crisis State Which Make it Amenable to Treatment . . . . .	30
The Basic Modes of Social Work Intervention . . . . .	31
Overview of Treatment Approaches. . . . .	31
Psychosocial Approach . . . . .	31
Problem-Solving Approach. . . . .	34
Crisis Intervention . . . . .	37
Social Group Work . . . . .	40
Behavior Modification. . . . .	46
Family Therapy. . . . .	51
Transactional Analysis. . . . .	55
Client-Centred Approach . . . . .	59
Functional Approach. . . . .	61
Social Work Intervention in Marital Conflicts and Dissolution . . . . .	64
Summary and Synthesis . . . . .	80

Chapter

III. METHODOLOGY . . . . .	84
Definitions of Concepts . . . . .	85
Design. . . . .	86
Study Population and Sampling Procedure . . . . .	87
Data Collection Instrument. . . . .	89
Analysis of Data. . . . .	90
Assumptions . . . . .	90
IV. STATISTICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE RESPONDENTS. . . . .	93
V. PRESENTATION OF THE DATA. . . . .	99
Theoretical Orientation . . . . .	99
Concepts and Techniques . . . . .	104
Attitudes and Perceptions of Respondents Regarding Marital Separation. . . . .	116
Generalized Comments. . . . .	125
VI. SUMMARY . . . . .	128
VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS. . . . .	135
APPENDICES . . . . .	140
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	153

## LIST OF TABLES

1.	Years of Practice in a Social Work Setting . . . .	95
2.	Years of Experience in Working with Marital Separation or Divorce. . . . .	96
3.	Number of Cases involving Marital Separation Counselling with which Respondents Worked. . . .	96
4.	Frequency of Utilization of Theoretical Models . .	100
5.	Family Members seen Regarding Marital Conflict Prior to Marital Separation. . . . .	105
6.	Setting with Manner in which Family Members Were Seen. . . . .	106
7.	Manner in which Family Members Were Seen with Level of Education . . . . .	107
8.	Manner in which Family Members Were Seen with Years of Experience. . . . .	107
9.	Theoretical Models used Prior to, During and After the Act of Marital Separation. . . . .	108
10.	Respondents Opinion of Who Should Make the Decision to Initiate a Separation or Divorce . .	114
11.	Community Resources Used . . . . .	116
12.	Attitudes of Social Workers Regarding Marital Separation . . . . .	118
13.	Statements with a Correlation Greater Than .4. . .	123

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

We are currently living in a society characterized by rapid technological and social change which has had a tremendous impact upon marital and family life styles. One of the most significant trends has been the upsurge in the number of marital separations and divorces. Canada, historically, has maintained one of the lowest divorce rates found in Westernized countries, however this rate has recently been increasing rapidly. Statistics, which indicated a steady increase in the rate of divorces in Canada from 1921 to 1968, have indicated a sharp rise in the divorce rate after legislation was passed in 1968 enabling the provinces to handle their own divorce proceedings.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the divorce rate of 66. per 1,000 marriages in 1968 was more than doubled in 1969 when the divorce rate rose to 143.1. Kubat and Thorton do not believe that divorces show any sign of abating, and indicated the possibility that the exigencies of modern Canadian society would boost our national divorce rate close to that of the United States.

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<sup>1</sup>Daniel Kubat and David Thorton, A Statistical Profile of Canadian Society (Toronto: McGraw Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1974), pp. 86-87.

The increasing number of marital separations and divorces has tremendous implications and ramifications for family living today. Our own professional experience as employees in Child welfare and family service agencies has led us to believe that marital separation or divorce can lead either to a successful resolution of chronic marital conflict or to an escalation of personal and familial turmoil.

Our views have been supported by David Cline and Jack C. Westman, who published their research on "The Impact of Divorce on the Family" in 1971.<sup>2</sup> Their study revealed that, despite the expectation that divorce resolves a disturbed marital relationship by terminating it, in many cases the disturbed relationship could persist after divorce has taken place. Cline concluded that, "when couples' interactional patterns remained unresolved they represented an interrupted task."<sup>3</sup> Post divorce problems occurred when persons continued to work through the interrupted task.

Sociological researchers have dealt extensively with the factors contributing to marital breakdown and, to a lesser extent, psychological researchers have outlined the psychological factors involved.

In view of the increasing number of marital separations and divorces, and their impact upon family living, we became

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<sup>2</sup>David W. Cline and Jack C. Westman, "The Impact of Divorce on the Family," Child Psychiatry and Human Development, vol. 2 (Winter 1971), pp. 78-83.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

aware of the lack of research done on the effectiveness of social work intervention in the marital separation process.

Our initial review of the literature and experiential survey of social work professionals in the field of marital counselling indicated that the separation process has not been clearly delineated. While most agreed that marital separation constitutes a crisis for the spouses involved, there appeared to be no consensus on the necessary stages to be worked through in order to reach a healthy resolution of this crisis. The lack of clarity in the separation process was understandable in view of the fact that, while the social work profession has traditionally been involved and claimed a questionable expertise in marital counselling, the profession's involvement in separation counselling has been a relatively new phenomenon. However the appearance, during the past two years, of articles, task forces, and courses concerning social work intervention in marital separation and divorce has indicated that at least some social workers have been attempting to adapt their practice to meet the changing needs and attitudes of their clients. These new trends in social work intervention have indicated that, along with theoretical orientation and modes of intervention, the worker's own attitudes and values about marriage and divorce will play a dynamic and intrinsic part in the decisions his clients will make.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Esther O. Fisher, "A Guide to Divorce Counselling," The Family Coordinator, vol. 22 (January 1973), p. 56.

Considering, first, the rising number of marital separations and divorces, the consequences of which have implications for family lifestyles; second, the recent trends in the social work profession directed towards developing more effective modes of intervention in working with spouses who are separating; and third, the lack of empirical research regarding the effectiveness of social work intervention in the marital separation process, we were interested in discovering what modes of intervention social workers in a variety of settings in the Windsor area found to be most effective in working with separating spouses.

More specifically, the objectives of this research project were to survey

- (1) theoretical orientations
- (2) the methods of intervention
- (3) the attitudes of social workers who were assisting spouses in the process of marital separation in the Windsor area

Realizing that we were still in a state of problem formulation, we believed that the results of this research project would contribute to current understanding of social work intervention in the marital separation process by

- (1) outlining current modes of social work intervention and current trends in social work intervention in the marital separation process through an extensive review of the literature
- (2) assessing the attitudes of social workers in the



Windsor area towards changing trends in marriage and family life and social workers' adaptations in their practice to these changes

(3) developing hypotheses for future research in the area of social work intervention in the marital separation process

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In order to gain a more complete understanding of social work intervention in the process of marital separation, we have reviewed current literature concerning changing trends in marital and family life, sociological and psychological factors contributing to marital breakdown, the separation process, the basic modes of social work intervention, and current trends in social work intervention in the process of marital separation.

#### Changing Trends in Marriage and Family Life

The industrial revolution and subsequent rapid technological changes have had an immense impact on our society and the families within it. It would appear that the increasing rate of marital separation and divorce in our society has been a result of the changing nature of marital and family relations. We have therefore introduced the Review of the Literature with a discussion of changing marital and family trends, to provide the necessary framework upon which to build a more complete understanding of the marital separation process.

The key societal changes which have affected marriage

and the family have been industrialization, urbanization, and individualization.

### Industrialization

The basic change in the socioeconomic orientation of our post-industrial society has been a shift in the critical socioeconomic<sup>5</sup> role of the family from that of producer to that of consumer.<sup>5</sup> Thus the family changed from a unit of domestic and agricultural production dominated by an authoritarian patriarch to more of an equalitarian consuming group. The change of the family from production to the centre of consumption necessitated a loss of family functions. Modern families discharge only a few limited functions; they provide an outlet for the affections of its members and have partial authority over the rearing of children. The family today elaborates functions concerned with production and preservation of personality. Reuben Hill perceptively noted that

. . . the modern family lives in a greater state of tension precisely because it is the great burden carrier of the social order. In a society of rapid social change, problems outnumber solutions, and the resulting uncertainties are absorbed by the members of society who are for the most part also members of families. Because the family is the bottleneck through which all troubles pass, no other association so reflects the strains and stresses of life.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Willard Waller, The Family, revised by Reuben Hill (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1951), p. 507.

<sup>6</sup>Reuben Hill, Families Under Stress (New York: Harper, 1949), p. viii.

Substantial evidence from anthropology has suggested that when the family was not held together by other than companionship and erotic ties it tended to be dissolved and formed anew rather easily.<sup>7</sup>

Technological developments which made available for consumption such items as automobiles, telephones, television, and birth control pills have had tremendous impact upon marital and family living.

Waltz believed that the new technology reduced a large and simple world to a small but complicated one. He viewed the family as constantly being impinged upon by racial, cultural, or ethnic differences.<sup>8</sup>

The employment demands on both men and women have had a great effect on family life. Families have constantly been uprooted and moved from place to place in response to the changing demands of industry or to the changing opportunities of a career. The job demands "by redefining the provider role have increasingly become antithetical to the expressive needs of the family and have created tensions in the family."<sup>9</sup> Thus it appears that the dynamism of technologically driven society has made the important nurturing and

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<sup>7</sup>Waller, op. cit., p. 512.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas H. Walz, "The Family, The Family Agency and Post-industrial Society," Social Casework vol. 56 (January 1975), p. 15.

<sup>9</sup>David A. Schultz, The Changing Family (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1972), p. 350.

companionship functions of the family more difficult to perform.

### Urbanization

The single most important social process of our times made possible by vast technological advancements has been the urbanization of Western society, including Canada.<sup>10</sup>

In 1871 in Canada the proportion of urban population was about 20 per cent. In 1971 it had increased to 80 per cent and since then has continued to increase.<sup>11</sup>

Urbanization has caused a phenomenal increase in the scale of social organization so that family functions are increasingly being carried out by other institutions of a more corporate nature.<sup>12</sup> The diversity and specification of community functions in institutions in urbanized areas has led to the family experiencing an increase in the frequency of secondary and transient contacts and a reduction in primary or permanent relationships. Walz noted that, while the family was "once an invention designed to foster primary, intimate relationships the family no longer appears to provide this opportunity in sufficient quantity and depth."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Parvez A. Wakil, "Marriage and Family in Canada: A Demographic Cultural Profile," The Canadian Family, ed. K. Ishwaran (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada Ltd., 1971), p. 317.

<sup>11</sup>Kubat and Thorton, op. cit., pp. 86-87.

<sup>12</sup>Walz, op. cit., pp. 14-15

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

Waller Believes that "organization of the community as a primary group has so broken down that the community no longer exerts any effective control over family relationships, it is rather more likely that the culture conflicts and social conflicts within the community will invade the home and disrupt it."<sup>14</sup>

Walz has defined urbanization as a process of converting a natural world into a man-made environment, and he has expressed concern over the lack of knowledge regarding the effects on human personality caused by this changing of man's spatial and physical organization.<sup>15</sup>

#### Individualization

Since the industrial revolution there has been a move towards individualization and the idea of a more democratic organization of the family. Marriage in our culture has become "a person-centred relationship stressing as needs to be met, sex satisfactions, companionship, and personality growth."<sup>16</sup>

The recent development of the women's liberation movement and the subsequent rise in the status of women has had a significant impact on marriage and family relations. It is now expected that sex be enjoyable for both men and women,

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<sup>14</sup>Waller, op. cit., p. 508.

<sup>15</sup>Walz, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

<sup>16</sup>Waller, op. cit., p. 512.

and there appears to be an increased expectation which adults place on each other for more sophisticated sexual satisfaction.<sup>17</sup>

Women have also gained greater economic power and independence as increasing numbers of married women have taken employment outside of the home. The dual-career orientation has created a greater strain on the relationship of the sexes. Walz cited the continued use of divorce or serial marriage as indicative of the nature of the adaptive response which couples have been making to the new pressures of the rising expectations of the sexes as individuals.<sup>18</sup>

The concept of romantic love has also had a significant influence in Canadian society, where most men and women have been free presumably to make their own choices of marital partners. Underlying the concept of romantic love, Mowrer identified the following assumptions: true happiness will be found only in marriage, mutual attraction and a similarity in backgrounds create ideal love relationships, and each individual will find an ideal mate.<sup>19</sup> Such idealism does little to prepare individuals for the reality of marriage, and has been cited by Mowrer as a contributing factor to

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<sup>17</sup>Otto Pollak, "Family Functions in Transition," Families of the Future (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State University Press, 1972), pp. 71-72.

<sup>18</sup>Walz, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>19</sup>Ernest Mowrer, Family Disorganization (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1972), Chpt. 5.

family disorganization.

General Characteristics of  
the Canadian Family Today

The traditional extended Canadian family has changed to a somewhat more isolated, more independent, nuclear family. The results of recent Canadian studies have indicated that nuclear family units maintain extensive social contact and mutual aid within an extended kin network.<sup>20</sup> The kin network functions as an optional voluntary system. It is possible that this modified extended kinship network, prevalent in Canadian society, has strengthened the family unit and has partially accounted for Canadian divorce statistics being lower than those in most Westernized countries.<sup>21</sup> However, a recent statistical report on Canadian society has shown that the legislation passed in 1968 enabling the provinces to handle their own divorce proceedings accounted for a very steep increase in the Registration of Divorce starting with 1969.<sup>22</sup> Kubat and Thorton do not believe that the rising divorce rates in Canada show any signs of abatement.

Other recent trends indicate earlier marriages and a small, if any, age difference between the marriage partners.

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<sup>20</sup>Marvin B. Sussman, "Themes for the 1970's," The Canadian Family, ed. K. Ishwaran (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada Ltd., 1971), pp. 517-527.

<sup>21</sup>Wakil, op. cit., p. 325.

<sup>22</sup>Kubat and Thorton, op. cit., pp. 86-87.



At present the population has a higher life expectancy, more people live to be 65,<sup>23</sup> and thus there are more couples living together when they are elderly. Early marriages coupled with longer life expectancy have increased the possible number of years of married life. Also the decrease in families with up to two children seems to be reversing as of the 1971 census.<sup>23</sup>

### The Stability of the Family Institution

It is noteworthy that those involved in family research have expressed concern over the ability of the family, in its present form, to withstand the overwhelming pressures stemming from a society in a constant state of change.

Sherman noted that

. . . there is a problem in the disparateness between the rate at which changes in the family are "demanded" and effected by our society and the rate at which individual persons can adapt psychologically and emotionally to these changes, can in effect find adequately substitutive cultures for personal growth and maturation. People and families may conform in external ways but at emotional and psychological costs.<sup>24</sup>

Radical theorists, such as Cooper, forecast the complete doom of our present family system.<sup>25</sup> Others, such as Koller and Bernard, express greater faith in the resilience

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>24</sup> Sanford N. Sherman, "Family Therapy," Social Work Treatment, ed. Francis J. Turner (New York: The Free Press, 1974), p. 458.

<sup>25</sup> David Cooper, The Death of the Family (New York: Vintage Books, 1970).

of marriage and the family but advocate the necessity of alternatives to the present monogamous marital relationships.<sup>26</sup> Alternative marital and family life styles advocated include term marriage, trial marriage, sexual hospitality, quasi-marriage, polygamy, group marriage, and communal living.<sup>27</sup>

### Sociological and Psychological Factors

#### Contributing to Marital Breakdown

In recent years sociologists and psychologists have conducted numerous studies attempting to ascertain the effects of different variables on marital stability. The results of these investigations have provided considerable insight into the factors contributing to marital breakdown.

#### Sociological Studies

Sociological researchers have found social class, occupation, economic position, educational level, sex, women's sexual responsiveness, race, age at marriage, pre-marital pregnancy, and the stage of the marital cycle to be variables which have significant effects on the marital relationship.

As social work practitioners counsel marital couples

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<sup>26</sup>Marvin R. Koller, Families: A Multigenerational Approach (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1974), Chpt. 16.

<sup>27</sup>Jessie Bernard, The Future of Marriage (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1972), Chpt. 12.

from highly diverse backgrounds, it would appear that social workers involved in marriage and separation counselling should have an essential understanding of the effects of the above mentioned factors on their clients' marital relationships in order to provide effective therapeutic intervention.

The interrelated variables of social class, occupation, education, and economic position have been the factors most intensively researched by sociologists in relation to marital stability.

The results of the following studies including Komorovsky (1964), Scanzoni (1965), Levinger (1966), Bernard (1966), Scanzoni (1968), Renne (1970), Palmer (1970), Glick (1971), Cutright (1971), and Fahs Beck (1973), were mutually supportive regarding the effects of education, occupation, and economic position on the marital relationship.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Mirra Komorovsky, Blue Collar Marriage (New York: Random House, 1964); John Scanzoni, "A Re inquiry into Marital Disorganization," Journal of Marriage and the Family, vol. 27 (Nov. 1965), pp. 483-491; George Levinger, "Sources of Marital Dissatisfaction Among Applicants for Divorce," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, vol. 36 (Oct. 1966); pp. 803-807; Jessie Bernard, "Marital Stability and Patterns of Status Variables," Journal of Marriage and the Family, vol. 30 (Sept. 1968), pp. 452-461; Karen S. Renne, "Correlates of Dissatisfaction in Marriage," Journal of Marriage and the Family, vol. 32 (Feb. 1970), pp. 54-67; Sally E. Palmer, "Reasons for Marital Breakdown," Journal of Comparative Family Studies, vol. 2 (Autumn 1971), pp. 251-267; Paul C. Glick, "Frequency, Duration and Probabilities of Marriage and Divorce," Journal of Marriage and the Family, vol. 3 (Mar. 1971), pp. 307-317; Phillip Cutright, "Income and Family Events: Marital Stability," Journal of Marriage and the Family, vol. 33 (Mar. 1971) pp. 291-306; Dorothy Fahs Beck, Progress in Family Problems (New York: Family Service Association of America, 1973).

The profile drawn from the results of these studies was that those with little education and low income were more dissatisfied with their marriage and had a high probability of early divorce. Dissolved marriages showed some indication of divergence in former spouses' class backgrounds, educational levels, and occupational norms. Spouses from lower class marriages appeared to be polarized by competing kin interests. Middle-class families experiencing fewer divorces did not appear polarized along kin relations. It therefore appeared that the proportion of stable marriages increased with schooling, occupation, and income. Also the results of Cutright's study (1971) provided some indication that the married couple's income was the key factor in marital stability, with occupation and education contributing little positive effect when the effect of income on stability was removed.<sup>29</sup>

The results of the studies done by Komorovsky (1964), Levinger (1966), and Fahs Beck (1973), together indicated that lower class and middle class persons presented different marital difficulties.<sup>30</sup> The profile we drew from the results of these studies was that lower class and middle class persons presented different marital difficulties. Spouses of middle class marriages appeared more concerned with psychological and emotional interactions, including conflicts over sex, leisure, infidelity, children, and

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<sup>29</sup>Cutright, op. cit., pp. 291-306.

<sup>30</sup>Komorovsky, op. cit.; Levinger, op. cit., pp. 803-807; Fahs Beck, op. cit.

relatives. Spouses of lower-class marriages appeared more concerned with financial problems and unsubtle actions of their partners, including infidelity, physical abuse, and alcoholism.

The variables of race, age at marriage, pre-marital pregnancy, and stage in the marital cycle, and their relationship to marital stability have been researched substantially by sociologists. The results of the studies done on race by Bernard (1966) and Glick (1971) indicated that negro marriages were generally less stable than white marriages, although the disparity lessened but did not disappear with their rise in social class.<sup>31</sup>

The results of the studies by Lowrie (1965), Palmer (1970), and Glick (1971) indicated that both youth and pre-marital pregnancy were factors with a strong unstabilizing potential in the marriage.<sup>32</sup>

The results of the studies on the stages in the family life cycle, including Bradburn and Caplovitz (1965), Rollins and Feldman (1970), Hicks and Platt (1970), and Geismar (1972), indicated that people who were currently raising children appeared more likely to be dissatisfied than people

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<sup>31</sup>Bernard, op. cit., p. 421; Glick, op. cit., pp. 307-317.

<sup>32</sup>Samuel H. Lowrie, "Early Marriage: Premarital Pregnancy and Associated Factors," Journal of Marriage and the Family, vol. 27 (Jan. 1965), pp. 48-58; Palmer, op. cit., pp. 251-267; Glick, op. cit., pp. 307-317.

who had never had children or whose children had left home.<sup>33</sup> Wives appeared to experience the most dissatisfaction during the child-bearing and child-rearing phases. Although results of most of the above studies indicated a gradual decrease in marital satisfaction, others indicated abrupt changes and some increases over time. For example, the research results of Bradburn (1965) and Rollins and Feldman (1970) indicated that marital satisfaction increased after the children left home.<sup>34</sup> We concluded from the results of the above studies on the family life cycle that the stages in that cycle where dissatisfaction was highest would constitute times when the potential for marital breakdown might also be high.

The variables of sex and sexual responsiveness and their effect on marital stability have not been researched as extensively as the variables discussed previously.

Levinger, in his study (1966) mentioned previously in the context of social class, compared marital complaints according to sex.<sup>35</sup> Wives' marital complaints exceeded husbands' by a ratio of 2:1. Wives complained significantly

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<sup>33</sup>Norman M. Bradburn and David Caplovitz, Reports on Happiness (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1965), pp. 128-135; Boyd C. Rollins and Harold Feldman, "Marital Satisfaction over the Family Life Cycle," Journal of Marriage and the Family, vol. 32 (Jan. 1970), pp. 20-27; Mary W. Hicks and Marilyn Platt, "Marital Happiness and Stability: A Review of the Research in the Sixties," Journal of Marriage and the Family, vol. 32 (Nov. 1970), pp. 553-573; Ludwig L. Geismar, Early Supports For Family Life (Meutchen: The Scarecrow Press Inc., 1972).

<sup>34</sup>Bradburn and Caplovitz, op. cit., pp. 128-135; Rollins and Feldman, op. cit., pp. 20-27.

<sup>35</sup>Levinger, op. cit., pp. 803-807.

more about physical abuse, financial problems, drinking, and their spouses' verbal abuse. Wives also complained more, but to a less significant degree, about neglect of home, lack of love, and mental cruelty.

Husbands complained more about in-law trouble and sexual compatibility. As mentioned previously, there were significant differences in the complaints between middle and lower class husbands and between middle and lower class wives. The results of Levinger's study indicated that men and women viewed their marital difficulties from different perspectives determined by their social class position.

Clark and Wallin (1965) investigated the relationship between wives' sexual responsiveness and the quality and duration of their marriages.<sup>36</sup>

The results of their study indicated that in marriages described as positive in quality there tended to be an increase in the wives' sexual responsiveness during approximately the first five years of marriage. Marital relationships which were more negative were associated with decreased responsiveness in the later years of marriage.

The results of Levinger's (1966) and Clark and Wallin's (1965) studies, although not conclusive, indicated that sex and sexual responsiveness affect marital stability.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Alexander Clark and P. Wallin, "Women's Sexual Responsiveness and the Duration and Quality of their Marriages," American Journal of Sociology, vol. 71 (Sept. 1965), pp. 187-196.

<sup>37</sup>Levinger, op. cit., pp. 803-807; Clark and Wallin, op. cit., pp. 187-196.

## Psychological Studies

We discovered fewer psychological studies than sociological studies pertaining to marital stability. The psychological researchers focused on couples' interaction, communication, and reactions to separation and divorce.

The researchers Katz (1965), Catrell and Nesselroade (1967), and Clements (1967), investigated different variables and their effects on marital stability.<sup>38</sup> The results of Katz' study (1965) on communication and marital stability indicated that troubled couples were more discrepant in their overall semantic structure than untroubled couples.<sup>39</sup> More specifically,

. . . the troubled couples were more discrepant in the meanings they attributed to concepts they defined as marriage related concepts and also showed greater discrepancies in the meanings they attributed to marriage related concepts than in the meanings they ascribed to concepts unrelated to marriage.<sup>40</sup>

The results of the study conducted by Catrell and Nesselroade (1967) on the relationship of personality factors to marital stability indicated that instability was assoc-

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<sup>38</sup>Myer Katz, "Agreement on Connotative Meaning in Marriage," Family Process, vol. 4 (Jan. 1965), pp. 67-74; Raymond Catrell and John Nesselroade, "Likeness and Completeness Theories Examined by Sixteen Personality Factor Measures on Stable and Unstable Married Couples," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, vol. 7 (Dec. 1967), pp. 351-361; William H. Clements, "Marital Interaction and Marital Stability: A Points of View and a Descriptive Comparison of Stable and Unstable Marriages," Journal of Marriage and the Family, vol. 29 (Nov. 1967), pp. 697-702.

<sup>39</sup>Katz, op. cit., pp. 67-74.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 67.



iated with large differences in outgoingness, enthusiasm, sensitivity, and drive. Stability appeared to be facilitated by "differences in dominance and guilt proneness, a likeness in intelligence, emotional stability, enthusiasm, conscience, social boldness and imagination."<sup>1</sup>

The results of Clement's study (1967) on the effects of behavioral interaction and marital stability indicated that both stable and unstable couples were aware of the effects of specific behavior on their spouses.<sup>2</sup> He postulated that it was "perhaps not the awareness of the effects of behavior that discriminated between the stable and unstable, but rather an unwillingness to change behavior."<sup>3</sup>

The researchers Pearlman (1970) and Cline and Westman (1971) investigated reactions of spouses to separation and divorce.<sup>4</sup> The results of Pearlman's study on female married psychiatric outpatients and their reactions to periodic separation supported Bowlby's hypothesis. Bowlby postulated that the separation reaction is a psychobiological response pattern that has different implications according

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<sup>1</sup>Catrell and Nesselroad, op. cit., pp. 351-361.

<sup>2</sup>Clements, op. cit., pp. 697-702.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 701.

<sup>4</sup>Chester A. Pearlman, "Separation Reactions of Married Women," American Journal of Psychiatry, vol. 126 (Jan. 1970), pp. 70-74; David W. Cline and Jack C. Westman, "The Impact of Divorce on the Family," Child Psychiatry and Human Development, vol. 2 (Winter 1971), pp. 78-83.

to the characterological development of the individual.<sup>45</sup> Each patient showed the successive phases of protest against acceptance of the separation, despair, and detachment that Bowlby observed in his studies on separation in childhood. Pearlman found also that, "separation crises made patients open to therapeutic intervention so that unusually rapid and positive results could be obtained."<sup>46</sup> He also observed that successful adaptation to the separation crisis required the capacity to be alone.

The results of Cline and Westman's study (1971) on reactions to divorce indicated that frequently divorce did not end disturbed marital relationships.<sup>47</sup> Of the 105 families studied who experienced divorce, 52 percent had hostile post divorce interactions requiring at least one court intervention, and 31 percent required 2 to 10 court interventions in a two year follow-up period. The legal reasons for court action centred around money and children. Commonly observed family dynamic patterns included (a) hostile interaction between divorced spouses over the parenting roles; (b) continued conflict between divorced spouses, but not involving the children or extended family; (c) perpetuation by the children of interaction between their divorced parents; (d) special alliances between one parent

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<sup>45</sup>John Bowlby, Attachment and Loss 2 Vols. (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1971), vol. 2 Separation.

<sup>46</sup>Pearlman, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>47</sup>Cline and Westman, op. cit., pp. 78-83.

and child against the other parent; and (e) continued interaction of divorced partners perpetuated by the extended family.<sup>48</sup>

Cline concluded that "when couples interactional patterns remained unresolved they represented an interrupted task."<sup>49</sup> Post divorce problems occurred when persons continued to work through the interrupted task.

#### The Separation Process

In view of the changing trends in family life styles, with the subsequent upsurge in the number of marital separations and divorces, we noted the obvious neglect of the topic of the marital separation process in the social work and psychological literature. The phenomenon of separation and its effects on children has been studied extensively by John Bowlby.<sup>50</sup> He observed three successive reactions of children to separation

- 1) Protest - separation anxiety
- 2) Despair - grief and mourning
- 3) Detachment - defense

Bowlby found that separation aroused anger, ambivalence, and anxiety in children. Their anxious and angry behavior was

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>50</sup>Bowlby, op. cit., pp. 26-30.

directed towards the attachment figure. The anxious attachment was an attempt to retain maximum accessibility to the attachment figure; the anger was both a reproach at what had happened, and a deterrent against it happening again. Painful conflicts evolved from the feelings of love, anxiety, anger, and hatred directed towards the same person.<sup>51</sup>

Pearlman, in his study on reactions to separation (mentioned previously), observed his women patients going through the same reaction phases of protest, despair, and detachment that Bowlby observed in young children.<sup>52</sup>

Norman Stanley, in his exploratory analysis of marital separation, found that marital unhappiness appeared to be an antecedent necessary condition for separation to occur.<sup>53</sup> He also found that alternatives to a marriage assumed a sufficient, but not necessary position in the explanation of separation, but that it was a necessary condition if separation was to be durable.

Ronald Chen, in his article on divorce, described the decision to terminate the marriage as

. . . the beginning of a painful complicated and emotionally overwhelming process . . . elements of disappointment, a feeling of letdown over a major life endeavor. This failure leads to self-reproach, a blow to self-esteem, and as a result to a sense of guilt

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., pp. 247-253.

<sup>52</sup>Pearlman, op. cit., pp. 70-74.

<sup>53</sup>Norman Stanley, "An Exploratory Analysis of Two Dimensions of Family Separation," 31 Dissertation Abstracts International, 1970, 1374-A.

that frequently results in depression and emotional instability.<sup>54</sup>

Robert Williamson, in his book Marriage and Family Relations, described marital breakdown as a process of role change involving

. . . alteration in the perception of the images of each other held by husband and wife, as well as changes in self-image . . . related to the undercurrent of recrimination, hostility, and guilt accompanying divorce . . . the portrayal of conflict in which the stakes are the survival or termination of the marriage.<sup>55</sup>

Although the above authors have not outlined the marital separation process in detail, they have described it as a painful, emotional process which stirs up a powerful mixture of guilt, bitterness, grief, anxiety, love, and hate within the persons involved. We have assumed that this painful emotional process of separation constitutes a crisis in the lives of those involved, and as such, can be most accurately described within the context of crisis theory.

#### Crisis Theory and the Separation Process

Crisis theory begins with the postulate that an individual strives to maintain himself in a state of equilibrium or harmony with his own inner needs and instincts, and with the environment or milieu in which he finds himself.

In her article on marital conflict, Dorothy Fahs Beck

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<sup>54</sup>Ronald Chen, "The Dilemma of Divorce: Disaster or Remedy," The Family Coordinator, vol. 17 (1968), p. 252.

<sup>55</sup>Robert C. Williamson, Marriage and Family Relations (New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1965), p. 527.

defined the marital equilibrium as the "dovetailing of the partners' needs and patterns of reciprocity in meeting, such as will maintain over the long run, an equilibrium in gratifications that is acceptable to both."<sup>56</sup>

Reva S. Wiseman, in her description of "Crisis Theory and the Process of Divorce," stated that the process of marital breakdown began with "the presence in a marriage of a homeostasis that is not adequate to cope with more than the minimum of life stresses."<sup>57</sup>

Donna Aquilera described the balancing factors affecting a person's equilibrium as the perception of the event, situational supports, and coping mechanisms. Perception of the event refers to the person's ability to relate his stressful feelings to the event. Situational support refers to the persons available in the environment that could be depended on to help solve the problem. Coping mechanisms refers to the person's ego strengths and skills in coping with everyday anxiety and tension. Aquilera maintained that if one or more of the balancing factors was missing, a state of crisis would occur.<sup>58</sup>

Lydia Rapoport and Naomi Golan viewed the factors

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<sup>56</sup>Dorothy Fahs Beck, "Marital Conflict: Its Course and Treatment as seen by Caseworkers," Social Casework, vol. 47 (April 1966), p. 212.

<sup>57</sup>Reva S. Wiseman, "Crisis Theory and the Process of Divorce," Social Casework, vol. 56 (April 1975), p. 206.

<sup>58</sup>Donna C. Aquilera, Janice M. Messick, and Marlene S. Farrell, Crisis Intervention Theory and Methodology (Saint Louis: C. V. Mosby Co., 1970), pp. 52-53.

causing the crisis state from a different perspective.<sup>59</sup> They believed that there must first be a hazardous event, either internal or external, which places the person in a vulnerable state. Rapoport believed that while the hazardous event poses a problem in the present, it may also be linked to past unresolved conflicts. These previous failures may act as an additional burden in the crisis.

Fahs Beck's theoretical construct of the cycle of marital conflict described the hazardous event in terms of the marriage relationship as "the trigger." The "trigger" was a new development which intruded to upset the marital balance, overwhelming one or more of the spouses. Wiseman believed that this stress could be of any type and appear relatively minor, for example, a visit from a mother-in-law, or a child going away to school. She maintained that almost any stress could provoke a marital crisis if the system was not flexible enough to accomodate it.<sup>60</sup> Fahs Beck felt that this added stress would trigger "some dramatic new action—some direct, though perhaps ill-advised, problem-solving effort."<sup>61</sup>

The crisis theorists Rapoport and Golan described the

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<sup>59</sup>Naomi Golan, "When is a Client in Crisis," Social Casework, vol. 50 (July 1969), pp. 389-394; Lydia Rapoport, "The State of Crisis: Some Theoretical Considerations," Crisis Intervention: Selected Readings ed. Howard S. Parad (New York: Family Service Association of America, 1965), pp. 22-32.

<sup>60</sup>Wiseman, op. cit., p. 206.

<sup>61</sup>Fahs Beck, op. cit., p. 213.

reactions of a person in the vulnerable state as either viewing the hazardous event as a threat and reacting with anxiety, as a loss and reacting with depression, or as a challenge and reacting with mobilization of energy and solution finding activities.<sup>62</sup>

Golan postulated that a precipitating factor, frequently quite a minor incident, would convert the vulnerable state into an active crisis state. In the state of crisis, "the tension and anxiety have risen to a peak and the individual's built-in homeostatic devices no longer operate."<sup>63</sup>

In Fahs Beck's theoretical construct, the major crisis of marital conflict is labelled the "clash." She felt that the unexpected sudden action initiated by the trigger phase would precipitate an open clash or blowup. Under its impact, "the submerged conflict could no longer be kept under control and the long-suppressed emotions burst forth."<sup>64</sup> The occurrence of stress, either internal or external, would make it impossible to continue denying that something was wrong with the marital relationship. Wiseman, in her description of the crisis of marital breakdown outlined the initial response to the clash as a reaction to a loss: "outright grief, feelings of depression and isolation and an inability to communicate."<sup>65</sup> If the pile-up of hostility and erosions

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<sup>62</sup>Rapoport, op. cit., pp. 22-32.

<sup>63</sup>Golan, op. cit., p. 393.

<sup>64</sup>Fahs Beck, op. cit., p. 213.

<sup>65</sup>Wiseman, op. cit., p. 207.



of rewards were so great that the marital balance was completely destroyed, continuation of the marriage would be impossible. At that point, the likelihood of the marital conflict spiralling into the more overwhelming crisis of physical separation would be great. Wiseman noted that, as the ending of the marriage becomes more of a reality, the spouses feelings of depression would abate, and their underlying anger would emerge.<sup>66</sup> Feelings of overt anger toward a spouse would be alternated with intense ambivalence about terminating the marriage. Wiseman also maintained that it was necessary to work through this anger before a successful resolution of the crisis could be obtained. She was critical of lawyers' involvement at this stage, believing that they often only heightened the couple's anger.

The crisis of marital separation could be classified as an unanticipated or situational crisis. Aquilera described a situational crisis occurring whenever a stressful event took place in a person's life which threatened his sense of biological, psychological, or social integrity.<sup>67</sup> Rapoport described unanticipated crises as "an accident, or sudden loss, death, desertion, or divorce . . ."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., pp. 207-208.

<sup>67</sup> Aquilera, Messick, and Farrell, op. cit., Chpts. 6 and 7.

<sup>68</sup> Lydia Rapoport, "Crisis Intervention as a Mode of Brief Treatment," Theories of Social Casework ed. Robert W. Roberts and Robert H. Nee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 285.

Aspects of the Crisis State  
Which Make it Amenable  
to Treatment

There are several elements common to persons in an active state of crisis, which at times enable immediate intervention to be an effective therapeutic experience.

Of primary importance is the fact that persons in a crisis state are more susceptible to the influence of significant others. The degree of activity of the helping persons does not have to be high; a little help during the strategic period can produce much greater change than involved help during less receptive periods. The crisis state may also reactivate unresolved or partially resolved unconscious conflicts providing a second chance for correction of early faulty problem-solving. Wiseman noted that, "in the process of rebuilding a life-style to replace the one lived in marriage, divorcing spouses are often able to re-work their own earlier unresolved adolescent conflicts and to arrive at new resolutions involving identity and intimacy."<sup>69</sup>

It is also important to note that the active crisis state is limited in time, usually to six weeks, after which the person establishes either a healthy or pathological equilibrium. Thus, it can be seen that the crisis state can either promote or stifle mental health growth, depending upon the internal and external support available during its active phase.

We have concluded from the above information that

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<sup>69</sup>Wiseman, op. cit., p. 206.

social work intervention during the crisis of marital separation could be beneficial in helping family members re-establish a healthy and growth-promoting equilibrium.

### The Basic Modes of Social Work Intervention

In order to gain a more complete understanding of social work intervention in the marital separation process, we believed that an overview of the pertinent social work treatment processes was essential. Using the overview as a base, we discussed specifically the changing trends and issues regarding the social work profession's past and current involvement in situations of marital conflict and dissolution.

### Overview of Treatment Approaches

#### Psychosocial Approach

The general objective of psychosocial practice is the fostering of healthy growth patterns.<sup>70</sup> The theory base is primarily Freudian personality theory, with emphasis on the ego and its adaptive capacities.

The underlying assumptions of psychosocial practice are as follows:

- (1) Within limitations, human behavior can be understood and predicted

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<sup>70</sup>Francis J. Turner, "Psychosocial Theory," Social Work Treatment (New York: The Free Press, 1974), pp. 87-88.

(2) Human behavior can be influenced and changed in a predictable way.

(3) Human behavior can be influenced in a variety of ways including physical, human, and situational agents.

(4) A person's past is important.

(5) An individual is not fully aware of all the historical and present intrapersonal influences on his or her current functioning.<sup>71</sup>

Florence Hollis describes psychosocial intervention as essentially a systems' approach viewing the major system to which diagnosis and treatment are addressed, as the person in situation, gestalt, or configuration.<sup>72</sup> As such, this approach is concerned with both the inner psychological realities of man and the social context in which he lives.

The client-worker relationship is viewed as one of the chief ingredients in treatment, and diagnosis of the on-going process guides the worker at every point in the selection of what help to offer the client. Study and diagnosis enable the worker to bring together the available components of the situation in "an orderly economic manner that permits an adequate assessment to be made and responsible decisions to be arrived at."<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., pp. 87-88.

<sup>72</sup> Florence Hollis, "Social Casework: The Psychosocial Approach to Casework," Theories of Social Casework ed. Robert W. Roberts and Robert H. Nee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 33-77.

<sup>73</sup> Francis J. Turner, op. cit., p. 96.

The five major headings of worker/client interaction are

- (1) Sustaining Procedures
- (2) Procedures of Direct Influence
- (3) Procedures of Ventilation, Description and Exploration
- (4) Procedures that Encompass Reflective Consideration of the Current Person-Situation
- (5) Procedures that Encompass Reflective Consideration of the Past and its effect on Current Functioning <sup>74</sup>

Through the treatment process the worker attempts to . . . mobilize the strengths of the personality and resources of the environment at strategic points to achieve an improvement in the opportunities available to the individual and develop more effective personal and interpersonal functioning. <sup>75</sup>

Although the psychosocial approach has had a strong historical interest in casework with the individual, it has increasingly stressed the importance of the family. The results of studies on conjoint husband and wife interviews in cases of marital conflict indicated them to be valuable forms of treatment which "directed attention to the interactional aspects of disharmony especially the role of faulty communication." <sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., pp. 91-92.

<sup>75</sup>Encyclopedia of Social Work 16th ed., S.V. "Social Casework: The Psychosocial Approach," by Florence Hollis, p. 1225.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 1219.

Thus, the psychosocial approach strives for a more complete understanding of man in his psychosocial situation to better help him achieve his full potential in a satisfying manner. The theories and practice are not restricted to individual interviewing, but are equally applicable to practice utilizing conjoint, group, and family interviewing.

#### The Problem-Solving Approach

The problem-solving approach to social work intervention has its roots in psychodynamic theory and places strong emphasis on ego psychology. This approach also makes use of selected concepts from learning, existential, and functional theory. The aim of the problem-solving approach is to "raise and undergird the level of human competence and satisfaction in daily living, in the on-going person-to-person and person-to-task transactions involved in social functioning."<sup>77</sup>

The underlying assumption in the problem-solving approach is that the person's inability to cope with his problem on his own is due to some deficit in, or absence of one, or a combination of, the following problem solving means: the motivation to work on the problem in the appropriate ways, the capacity to work on the problem in the appropriate ways, and the opportunity whether of ways or

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<sup>77</sup>Helen Harris Perlman, "The Problem-Solving Model in Social Casework," Theories of Social Casework, ed. Robert W. Roberts and Robert H. Nee (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1970), p. 134.

means to meet or mitigate the problem.<sup>78</sup> On the basis of that central assumption, the social worker utilizing the problem-solving approach attempts

- (1) to release, to energize, and to give direction to the clients' motivation for change
- (2) to release and then to exercise repeatedly the clients' mental, emotional, and action capacities for coping with the problem or with himself in connection with it
- (3) to find and make accessible to the client such aids and resources as are necessary to the solution or mitigation of the problem<sup>79</sup>

The worker accepts the tangible and discrete problems brought to him by his clients, and if he discerns additional related problems he will bring them to the clients' attention. The problem-solving process remains mostly on the rational level but the worker also helps the client work through feelings which impede his ability to problem solve; e.g. anxiety, resistance.

As David Hallowitz notes, an enormous amount of the problem-solving activity goes on in the privacy of the worker's mind during, before, after, and between interviews.<sup>80</sup> The worker attempts to gain a diagnostic and dynamic understanding about the origins and current manifestations of the clients' problems. Based upon this understanding of his clients, the worker formulates in his own mind the essential

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>80</sup>David Hallowitz, "Problem-Solving Theory," Social Work Treatment ed. Francis J. Turner (New York: The Free Press, 1974), pp. 112-147.

nature of the treatment dynamics and process.

In order to be most useful in the problem-solving work with the client, the worker must be able to assert himself interactively with the client when it can be of therapeutic benefit.

Proponents of the problem-solving approach believe that it is an excellent treatment modality for handling relationship conflicts. The worker intervening with clients in relationship conflicts helps them

. . . to bring out into the open their feelings towards each other; helps them now to reach each other with respect to these feelings at the levels of mutual compassion and understanding; helps them gain a dynamic perspective about how the conflicts came into being and how they have been intensified subsequently; and finally helps them find new and more constructive ways of relating to each other.<sup>81</sup>

The primary problem-solving task is to help the participants find for themselves the direction they wish to take, whether it be to build the relationship or to terminate it temporarily or permanently.

Thus, the definition of problem-solving is broad, including not only direct work with the client, but also the internal problem-solving activity of the worker. As such the problem-solving work, "should take place in the context of the individual's or family's underlying problems, conflicts, and upset feelings; i.e. as an integral part of the treatment dynamics and process."<sup>82</sup> This approach may require assertive

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 143.



behavior on the part of the worker and the treatment process may flow from the problem-solving level to deeper levels of disturbance or vice-versa.

### Crisis Intervention

Crisis intervention has developed into a recognized treatment model within the past few decades. It developed mainly from the emergence of crisis theory and brief psychotherapy, two areas which had been developing independently along similar lines.

Crisis intervention is modelled on the life processes of growth, trial, error, and restitution, therefore it does not adhere to the medical model of curing an "ill" person. The major underlying assumption of this approach is that certain inevitable events in a person's life (e.g. marriage, birth, death) will invoke emotional stress followed by subsequent adaptations which could either improve or impair that person's functioning.<sup>83</sup>

Basically, crisis intervention is an ego-supportive method. The goals and measures used "are essentially ego-conservative or ego-restitutive concerned with the maintenance of defenses and repression of instinctual impulse seeking discharge."<sup>84</sup>

In general, the goals of crisis intervention are to

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<sup>83</sup>Aquilera, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

<sup>84</sup>Rapoport, "Crisis Intervention as a Mode of Brief Treatment," op. cit., p. 296.

resolve a person's immediate crisis and either restore the person's ego functioning to its level prior to the crisis or improve the person's functioning above the previous level. More specifically, Rapoport lists six goals for this kind of treatment. The four minimal goals are (1) relief of symptoms, (2) restoration to the optimal precrisis level of functioning, (3) understanding of the relevant precipitating events that contributed to the state of disequilibrium, and (4) identification of remedial measures which can be taken by the client and his family or which are available through community resources. If the person's personality and situation permits, work can be done on (5) recognition of the current stresses and their origins in past life experiences and conflicts, and (6) initiation of new models of perceiving, thinking, and feeling, as well as the development of new adaptive responses that will be useful beyond the immediate crisis resolution.<sup>85</sup>

Thus, crisis intervention is the conscious purposeful interaction of the therapist with the client in an attempt to help him develop the new patterns of response that are necessary for a healthy resolution of the crisis. The role of the worker requires an active and directive stance; his relationship with the client is built on authority based on expertness and competence.

The treatment methods utilized in crisis intervention are relatively similar to those used in supportive casework;

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., pp. 297-298.

however, there is some reordering in preferences for use. Key techniques are "anticipatory guidance, rehearsal for reality, and the learning of new social and interpersonal skills, all of which have a large educational component."<sup>86</sup> The requirement that the worker be active and directive restores the role of advice-giving to an important and useful technique. Realistic reassurance, clarification, and interpretation are also used selectively, especially in relation to present feelings and current conflicts.

Howard J. Parad outlines seven concepts he believes are essential in helping a client to successfully resolve a crisis situation as follows:

- (1) The client needs to have easy access to the worker, so that he can seek and receive assistance at the times when he feels that he most needs it
- (2) The client needs to have a continuous relationship with one worker, as opposed to seeing a new worker each time and having to re-introduce himself and his problem
- (3) The client and worker need to come to an early diagnosis of the problem, so that achievable treatment goals can be established and relief forthcoming
- (4) Information gathering and history taking need to be restricted to the context of the problem under consideration
- (5) The worker and agency need to be knowledgeable about and effective in working with a wide range of client problems
- (6) The agency needs to have an open door policy that invites people to return for help with recurrent crisis situations
- (7) There needs to be planned follow up safeguards to ensure that clients who have received short term

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<sup>86</sup>Naomi Golan, "Crisis Theory," Social Work Treatment, ed. Francis J. Turner (New York: The Free Press, 1974), p. 439.

services know that even though the formal period of help is terminated, the agencies' interest continues if further service should be needed <sup>87</sup>

As mentioned previously, we have assumed that marital separation is a crisis, therefore it would appear that crisis intervention is one method that could aid couples in successfully working through the painful separation process.

The ultimate goal of crisis intervention is crisis prevention. Therapists hope that when crisis intervention is a more established and well-known treatment model, an increasingly larger proportion of requests will be made by clients for anticipatory guidance. It is hoped that people in potential crisis situations will be able to work out tensions and problems in preventive intervention, thereby eliminating the state of active crisis.

#### Social Group Work

Social group work has been defined as "a method of social work which helps individuals to enhance their social functioning through purposeful group experiences and to cope more effectively with their personal, group, or community problems."<sup>88</sup> In the development of social group work the primary intellectual influences were from John Dewey

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<sup>87</sup>Howard J. Parad (ed.), Crisis Intervention: Selected Readings (New York: Family Service Association of America, 1965), p. 191.

<sup>88</sup>Gisela Konopka, Social Group Work: A Helping Process (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1963), p. 29.

and sociology.<sup>89</sup>

The basic assumptions underlying this approach are that, (1) the need for group experience is basic and universal and all persons need a variety of group experiences, (2) individuals can be helped to grow and change in personality and attitudes through experiences with other people in the setting of social agencies, and (3) persons not only develop in groups but also through groups.<sup>90</sup>

The various goals of social group work have been outlined as follows:

- (1) assisting in implementing the normal growth and continuing development of individuals within our society
- (2) assisting in supplementing lacks and deprivations in social experience and functioning of individuals and groups
- (3) assisting in modifying, correcting, and preventing individuals from social breakdown and deterioration
- (4) assisting in aiding individuals and groups to fulfill their motivations and capacities for contributing to their society<sup>91</sup>

Three distinct models of social group work have developed in an attempt to meet the above goals. These are the Social Goals model, the Remedial model, and the Reciprocal model.

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<sup>89</sup>Encyclopedia of Social Work 16th ed., S.V. "Social Casework and Social Group Work: Historical and Social Science Foundations," by Scott Briar, p. 124.

<sup>90</sup>Harleigh B. Trecker, Social Group Work (New York: Association Press, 1967), p. 9.

<sup>91</sup>Mary Louise Somers, "Helping Through Social Group Work," in Potentials for Service Through Group Work in Public Welfare (Chicago: American Public Welfare Association, 1962), pp. 3-4.

The Social Goals model originated in the earliest traditions of professional group work practice (eg. settlement house movement). Its theoretical underpinnings include neo-Freudian personality theories, sociological theory (i.e. opportunity theory, theories of powerlessness, cultural deprivation, and inter-generational alientation), theories of economic and political democracy, and the educational philosophies of Dewey, Kilpatrick and Lindeman.<sup>92</sup>

This model assumes that there is a unity between social action and individual psychological health, and that collective group action represents individual social competence.<sup>93</sup> Therefore, the Social Goals model seeks to provide the individual with the opportunity and assistance in revitalizing his drive towards others in a common cause and in converting self-seeking into social contribution. This model does not set up priorities for services, but insists that such priorities develop out of the community's particular needs.

Wiener views the role of the worker in the Social Goals model as that of an influence person with responsibility, "for the cultivation of social consciousness in groups."<sup>94</sup> The group worker ideally personifies the values of social responsibility and serves as a role model for the client,

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<sup>92</sup>Catherine P. Papell and Beulah Rothman, "Social Group Work Models: Possession and Heritage," Education for Social Work (Fall 1966), pp. 66-77.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>94</sup>Hyman J. Wiener, "Social Changes and Social Group Work Practice," Social Work, vol. 9 (July 1964), p. 109.

stimulating and reinforcing modes of conduct appropriate to citizenship responsibility directed towards social change."<sup>95</sup>

Thus, the Social Goals model seeks to enhance individual functioning through group participation in social action.

The Reciprocal model was developed by one author, William Schwartz, but has been influenced by many other theoretical sources. The knowledge base primarily originates in sociological systems and field theory. The social psychological theories of Adler, Fromm, and Sullivan have also influenced this model's underlying assumptions.<sup>96</sup>

This model assumes that an organic, systematic relationship exists between the individual and society and that in a formed group the people create many helping relationships in addition to and concurrent with the one formed by the worker. Based on these assumptions, the Reciprocal model does not begin with clearly specified goals; "it is only from the encounter of individuals that compose a reciprocal group system that direction or problem is determined."<sup>97</sup> It is this mutual aid system that forms the most notable concept in the Reciprocal model. The individual's diagnostic description is not regarded as an important predictor of his behavior in the group, so it is therefore not a tool used by

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<sup>95</sup>Papell and Rothman, op. cit., pp. 68-69.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., pp. 74-75.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

the worker when he selects group members.

The social worker within this context functions as a mediator or enabler to the needs system converging in the group. The worker-client relationship involves a deep emotional commitment from the worker who shares with the group, "his aspirations, knowledge, and effect within the boundaries of the contract between himself and the agency."<sup>98</sup>

Thus, the Reciprocal model views the small group as a unique system of relationships representing a special case of the general relationship between individuals and their society. This model attempts to utilize this "special case" to nourish and mediate individual and societal functioning.

The Remedial model is a clinical model, "focused upon helping the malperforming individual to achieve a more desirable state of social functioning."<sup>99</sup> Therefore, the group is viewed as a tool or context for treatment of the individual.

The early development of the Remedial model was greatly influenced by Redl; later elaborations came from Konopka, Sloan, Fisher, and Gantner. Robert Vinter, who has produced a systematic formulation of the model, has been identified as its major theoretician. In developing the theoretical base of this model, its theoreticians have drawn from individual psychological theory (including psychoanalytic and ego

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., p. 70.



psychology), from social role theory, and from theories of small group dynamics.<sup>100</sup>

The Remedial model assumes that the worker, after individually assessing a client, will be able to "integrate individual needs into a needs-satisfying system through the formation of a group."<sup>101</sup> This model also assumes that group development can be controlled and influenced by the worker's actions.

Thus, the treatment group is a formed group which has been diagnostically pre-selected by the worker. It is the group worker who diagnoses the need and formulates treatment goals for each individual group member. In this context, the worker is viewed as a change agent who utilizes a problem-solving approach to intervention. He is usually directive and "assumes a position of clinical pre-eminence and authority."<sup>102</sup>

Thus, the Remedial model focuses diagnostically on individual needs and utilizes the group process to aid the individual to function more adequately in a social context.

Although the three social group work models have different foci and somewhat different methods of achieving their goals, they all view the group work process as a potentially successful intervention for improving individuals'

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

functioning in society. Also, social group work has been utilized with some success in marital counselling, through the formation of couples groups who work together on sorting out marital conflicts.

### Behavior Modification

Behavior modification is based on learning theory and research on conditioning. The goal of this mode of intervention is to either promote changes in the client's behavior directly or to reprogram key people in the client's environment to act differently toward the client. The explicit goals of the client are accepted by the worker, who attempts to build upon the client's existing resources. Thus, in the behavior modification approach the worker "assesses and attempts to change the interaction between the client's behavior and the environment which produces and sustains it."<sup>103</sup>

Instead of claiming to work on global and general objectives, most behaviorists seek only to modify very specific behaviors. The behavioral efforts "are essentially efforts to achieve the acquisition of behavior, or its strengthening, maintenance, weakening, or elimination."<sup>104</sup>

Two major principles, based on scientific research on

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<sup>103</sup> Richard B. Stuart, "Behavior Modification: A Technology of Social Change," Social Work Treatment, ed. Francis J. Turner (New York: The Free Press, 1974), p. 402.

<sup>104</sup> Edwin J. Thomas, "Behavior Modification and Casework," Theories of Social Casework, ed. Robert W. Roberts and Robert H. Nee (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 189.

the processes and principles of learning, underly the behavioral modification approach. The first is called the principle for operant behavior. This principle asserts that behavior in the operant realm is controlled by its consequences. The other main principle is the principle for respondent behavior. This principle asserts that behavior in the respondent realm is controlled by the stimuli which immediately antedate the responses.<sup>105</sup>

Although there is a wide diversity of behavioral approaches, there are some essential common themes in their intervention.<sup>106</sup> The first common theme is a focus on observable responses. Behaviorists believe that by focusing only on observable responses there will be a greater chance of making correct inferences about behavior and of attempting to take action with respect to factors that are essentially identifiable, accessible, or manipulatable.

A second theme is the behaviorist's focus upon more fundamental classes of behavior. The first, called operant behavior, involves the striated muscles and skeletal system and creates much of what is considered voluntary behavior. The second class of behavior, called respondent, utilizes mainly the glands and smooth muscles and creates much of what is considered involuntary behavior.

The behaviorist's focus upon alteration of either the

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 193.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., pp. 186-190.

immediate antecedents or consequences of problem behavior is a third common theme. Therefore most of their techniques involve "specific procedures by which antecedating stimuli may be altered, or the consequences of problem behavior may be rearranged."<sup>107</sup>

Thomas outlines five necessary conditions for achieving behavioral modification as follows:

- (1) It is necessary to maintain sensory contact among all parties
- (2) All parties must engage, at least to some extent, in attending responses with respect to the stimuli conveyed through the sensory medium
- (3) There should be habituation of all parties so that there is familiarization with the human and non-human stimuli of the situation
- (4) The worker must maintain conventional, culturally patterned civility
- (5) and the worker must maintain access to manipulatable and potentially controlling conditions<sup>108</sup>

In working with clients, the behaviorist must first make an accurate behavioral assessment upon which he bases his intervention to bring about behavior change. In making his behavioral assessment, the worker attempts to identify target behavior and its controlling and antecedent conditions. Several criteria can be used in selecting the starting targets of intervention. First, the target must be positive—that is, it must be possible to produce the desired behavior change through the reliance upon positive influence techniques. Second, the initial target should be one which

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<sup>107</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., pp. 198-199.

will preclude occurrence of as many other targets as possible when it is achieved. Third, the targets selected should lead to prompt change.<sup>109</sup>

There are two important factors which override the above criteria. First, behaviors which might result in harm to the clients or others must be the object of initial attention. Second, the client must have an opportunity to agree to all goals which do not involve minimally socially necessary behaviors.

Following the structural decisions, "relating to who will be included in the treatment and whether the focus will be on intra- or extra-therapeutic behavior, several other structuring manouevs typify behavior modification."<sup>110</sup> First, the focus of treatment is narrowed as closely as possible to an evaluation of present behavior. Second, the client is fully trained in the logic of intervention in order to equip him to be effective as possible as an accomplice in planning for changes in his own behavior. Third, provision is made for the systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of each step in the therapeutic process.

After a contract has been established to work on a problem and an assessment has been completed, specific responses will have been identified as either occurring too frequently or not frequently enough. This information will

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<sup>109</sup>Stuart, op. cit., p. 414.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., p. 413.

provide the main focus of intervention. Intervention might include Operant-related techniques such as positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, extinction, differential reinforcement, response shaping, and punishment. Intervention might, however, focus on Respondent related techniques, including classical conditioning, systematic desensitization, and flooding. More complex techniques involving more than one operant technique, or features of both operant and respondent techniques, may also be employed. These include negative practice, satiation, stimulus shaping, verbal instructions, behavioral rehearsal, rule making, model presentation, and position structuring.<sup>111</sup> A general rule employed by behaviorists is that "no deceleration techniques should ever be used unless alternative behaviors are positively reinforced."<sup>112</sup>

Behavioral modification techniques have been employed with apparent success in situations of marital conflict. Through lessening undesirable behavior and increasing the frequency of mutually desirable behavior, couples have been able to establish more satisfactory relationships.

Thus, behavior modification is a mode of intervention which focuses on specific observable behavior with the goal of strengthening desired behavior and weakening problematic behavior.

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<sup>111</sup>Thomas, op. cit., pp. 205-214.

<sup>112</sup>Stuart, op. cit., p. 411.

## Family Therapy

Family therapy has emerged in the last fifteen years and has rapidly gained acceptance as a treatment model in the helping professions. Its theoretical concepts have developed from general systems theory, social science contributions such as those of social role theory, small group theory, and communications theory, and in varying degrees from most social and behavioral scientific theoretical developments.<sup>113</sup>

The assumption underlying practice in family therapy is that individual behavior both effects and is a function of the family system. Therefore, any change in an individual's behavior will affect the family's homeostasis and any change in the family's homeostasis will affect the individual.

The ultimate goal in family therapy is to

. . . improve the lot (improve social functioning, restore the equilibrium, strengthen adaptation, etc.) of individual persons. To achieve this goal the family therapist tries to take full cognizance of the connective tissue binding the individuals and his family's destiny, the powerful linkages among the subsystems (individuals, pairs, triads, etc.) and between them and the family as a whole.<sup>114</sup>

As family therapy is still in its formative years, distinct differentiations in practice approaches have developed. The three major approaches to family therapy are the Psychoanalytic approach, the Integrative approach, and

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<sup>113</sup> Sanford N. Sherman, "Family Therapy," Social Work Treatment, ed. Francis J. Turner (New York: The Free Press, 1974), pp. 457-458.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 484.

the Communicative-Interactive approach. The Psychoanalytic approach to family therapy bases its explanation of human behavior primarily on intra-psychic mechanisms, and therefore continues to focus on the individual within the family.<sup>115</sup> Although there is much divergence among the psychoanalytic adherents, there are several variables common to this approach. They include the following:

- (1) A focus on the individual in treatment
- (2) This experience is preserved and is dynamically active in the individual minds of the family members and some important parts of it are unconscious
- (3) The experiences often hinder the separation and individuation of family members
- (4) These core aspects of members' personalities are difficult to modify and the facilitation of change takes a long time<sup>116</sup>

Psychoanalytic proponents believe that their approach brings more depth to the problem and provides more intensive treatment.

Those involved in the Communicative-Interactive approach to family therapy believe that

. . . family behavior may be perceived as circular rather than linear, as governed by homeostatic patterns of interaction which operate within the transactional system to preserve the balance of forces and needs.<sup>117</sup>

This approach focuses on the impact of all levels of communication upon the family system. The client is the family

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<sup>115</sup>Joan W. Stein, The Family as a Unit of Study and Treatment (Washington: Regional Rehabilitation Research Institute, 1973), pp. 21-39.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>117</sup>Meissner, op. cit., p. 23.



unit, and the therapist's role is to intervene to change the destructive rules of the family's endlessly cycling system. Although therapists using the Communicative-Interactive approach have developed differing treatment techniques, they all emphasize activity from the therapist, concern for alteration of behavior rather than insight, more intense focus on the present rather than the past, and more attention to interaction than to interpersonal experience.<sup>118</sup> Positive aspects cited for this approach are that it requires fewer staff members and, compared to most individual approaches, less time is required for successful treatment.

The Integrative approach to family therapy makes an eclectic attempt to include both the individual and the family within its diagnostic and treatment scheme. Thus, this form of therapy focuses on the "family system and family process, subsystems and processes in which various individuals and members are aligned, and yet relates to each individual member as a particular and different human being rather than as a part of an undifferentiated mass."<sup>119</sup> This approach blends the individual and family toward a dynamic abstraction—the person-in-his-situation. With this end in mind, its dominant concept is that of role.

Ackerman outlines the therapeutic tasks in the Integrative approach as being

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<sup>118</sup>Christian Beals and Andrew Farber, "Family Therapy: A View," Family Process, vol. 8 (Sept. 1969), p. 280.

<sup>119</sup>Sherman, op. cit., p. 465.

- (1) helping the family define the real content of family conflict through greater accuracy of perception and clarification
- (2) counteracting inappropriate displacement of conflict from its original objects to substitute objects
- (3) neutralizing the irrational prejudices and scapegoating involved in the displacement of conflict
- (4) reducing excessive conflict in a victimized part of the family, either in an individual or family pair<sup>120</sup>

Although the three approaches, Psychoanalytic, Communicative-Interactive, and Integrative all focus on differing aspects of the family, they all agree that working with the family unit is a viable form of treatment. Since this method of treatment is still in the experimental stage, many variations have been tried. Single families have been seen by single and multiple therapists, multiple families have been seen by single and multiple therapists, and groupings of the family (e.g. marital couples) have been seen by single and multiple therapists. Not uncommon and having many interesting and effective results is the practice of co-therapy, where two therapists function as a team in joint responsibility for the total family therapy.

The differing opinions on the practice methods of family therapy also carry over to indications and contra-indications for practice. Ackerman maintains that family therapy is contra-indicated, "where there is evidence of an irreversible trend toward disintegration and breakup of the

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<sup>120</sup>The Encyclopedia of Mental Health 1st ed. S.V. "Family Psychotherapy," by Nathan Ackerman, pp. 612-613.

family." However, other family therapists maintain that family treatment is indicated when the central problem is a marital one.

Thus, family therapy has four tiers of focus: the family as a part of the community, the family as a whole, each individual as a part or member, and each individual as discrete.<sup>121</sup> The long-term challenge to family therapy is to synthesize these several foci.

#### Transactional Analysis

Transactional Analysis is a relatively new mode of intervention, which has developed from the writings of Eric Berne. Its theoretical base rests firmly on psychoanalytic personality theory and on ego psychology. Eric Berne focuses only on observable ego functions and consciousness, due to his assumption that these concepts explain and predict behavior better than the usual psychoanalytic concepts.

The three major concepts upon which the practice of transactional analysis is based are ego states, games, and scripts.<sup>122</sup> The three observable forms of ego function are the Parent, the Adult and the Child. The Child ego state is essentially preserved in its entirety from childhood, the Adult ego state is essentially a computer, and the Parent ego state essentially consists of behavior copied from

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<sup>121</sup>Ibid., p. 612.

<sup>122</sup>Claude Steiner, Games Alcoholics Play (New York: Ballantine Books, 1971), p. 3.

parents or authority figures. Transactional analysts believe that a person operates from one of these three distinctive ego states at any one time. Diagnosis of ego states is made "by observing the visible and audible characteristics of a person's appearance or ego."<sup>123</sup>

The underlying assumption of transactional analysis holds that a person's behavior is "best understood if examined in terms of ego states, and that the behavior between two or more persons is best understood if examined in terms of transactions."<sup>124</sup> Complementary ulterior transactions progressing to a well-defined predictable outcome constitute a game.<sup>125</sup>

A script has been defined as a person's

... ongoing program for his life drama which dictates where he is going with his life and how he is going to get there. It is a drama he compulsively acts out, though his awareness of it may be vague.<sup>126</sup>

Theorists believe that an individual's choice of script will place him in one of three life stances: 1) I'm not O.K. you're O.K.; 2) I'm not O.K. you're not O.K.; 3) I'm o.k. you're not O.K. Only a script-free person would adopt the I'm O.K. - you're O.K. position, which is the only positive and functional life stance. The client is therefore considered

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>126</sup> Eric Berne, Games People Play (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1967), p. 48.

responsible for his actions because his disturbance is the result of decisions he has made.

Intervention commences when the client enters into a contract with a worker, who will attempt to cure or modify permanently a state of affairs which the client feels to be unsatisfactory. Transactional analysis is primarily a verbal intervention based on the assumption that "behavior can be modified by an exchange of verbal utterances."<sup>127</sup> It therefore is frequently practised in group settings.

Intervention strategies utilized by Transactional Analysts include work, antithesis or command, fun, permission, and protection.<sup>128</sup> Work is an Adult to Adult communication in which data is gathered, conclusions are drawn, and recommendations are made. Antithesis is an emergency transaction from Parent to Child which is used to arrest or interfere with certain transactional sequences deemed undesirable by the worker. Fun is a transaction in which the Child of the therapist and the Child of the client are able to experience joy together. Permission is a transaction in which the therapist attempts to align the patient with his original script-free, Natural Child ego state (I'm O.K. - you're O.K.). Protection follows logically from permission. The client ~~having~~ broken through a script impasse finds himself in a temporary state of panic and existential vacuum,

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<sup>127</sup>Dorothy Jongeward and Muriel James, Born to Win (Don Mills: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1973), p. 69.

<sup>128</sup>Steiner, op. cit., p. 190.

during which he requires temporary protection by the worker.<sup>129</sup>

The worker utilizes these techniques to increase his therapeutic effectiveness or potency. Therapeutic Potency refers to the therapist's capacity to bring about a speedy cure and "implies that the therapist is willing to attempt to cure the patient, to permit himself to do so, and to estimate the time and expense involved."<sup>130</sup>

The therapist treats each client as an important individual, and communicates openly with the client on all aspects of his thinking in regard to treatment. Thus, the language of transactional analysis, having been designed to be understandable and attractive, is taught to each client.

Transactional Analysis has been used with apparent success in counselling couples with marital problems. Proponents of this mode of intervention believe that "Transactional Analysis provides a simple vocabulary for a common language between mates, and between clients and their counselors, that can be used not only in marital counseling, but also in premarital and divorce counseling."<sup>131</sup>

Thus, Transactional Analysis focuses on helping clients' analyze their transactions and understand their underlying psychodynamics to enable them to alter their mode

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<sup>129</sup>Ibid., pp. 169-180.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>131</sup>Leonard Campos and Paul McCormick, Introduce Your Marriage to Transactional Analysis (Stockton, California: San Joaquin Ta Institute, 1972), p. iii.

of relating to others, and to move into an independent, script-free, I'm O.K. - you're O.K. position.

### Client-Centred Approach

The client-centred approach to intervention was developed by Carl Rogers, who has since remained the undisputed leader, principal advocate, and integrating influence in the school he has founded. Client-centred theorists have portrayed "a strongly 'holistic' and humanistic view of man clearly belonging, for example, in the 'third-force' cluster of viewpoints distinguished by Maslow."<sup>132</sup> The principle feature of Rogers' conceptualization of the therapeutic process is that "when the client perceives that the therapist has unconditional positive regard for him, and an empathic understanding of his internal frame of reference, then a process of change is set in motion."<sup>133</sup> During this process the client's awareness of his true feelings and experiences increases, and his self-concept becomes more congruent with the total experiences of the organism. The goal of the client-centred approach is to aid the client to develop complete congruence, which Rogers assumes will enable the client to be a fully functioning person. Rogers describes

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<sup>132</sup>G. T. Barrett Lennard, "The Client-Centred System: A Developmental Perspective," Social Work Treatment ed. Francis J. Turner (New York: The Free Press, 1974), p. 195.

<sup>133</sup>Carl R. Rogers, "A Theory of Therapy, Personality and Interpersonal Relationships as Developed in the Client-Centred Framework," Psychology A Study of Science ed. S. Koch vol. 3 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), pp. 212-221.

such a person as open to experience, having an absence of defensiveness, accurate awareness, unconditional self-regard, and harmonious relations with others.<sup>134</sup>

In Rogers' classical statement of the conditions of therapeutic change, he outlines six components. They include the following:

- (1) Two persons are in psychological contact
- (2) The client is in a state of incongruence, being vulnerable or anxious
- (3) The therapist is congruent or integrated in the therapy relationship
- (4) The therapist needs to experience unconditional positive regard (or prizing) for the client
- (5) The therapist must have an empathic understanding of the clients' internal frame of reference
- (6) The client must be able to register the therapist's unconditional positive regard and perceive the therapist's empathic understanding<sup>135</sup>

The role of the worker in the client-centred approach involves a very active, concentrated focusing of purpose, attention, skill, and energy. The worker enters into an intensely personal and subjective relationship with his client; he engages in active, concentrated, perceptive, empathic listening; he is genuine in meeting the client with the feelings he is experiencing, and through his deeply empathic listening and experiential responding the worker may go significantly beyond the client's expressed messages.

Marital counselling is an area in which client-centred

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., pp. 234-235.

<sup>135</sup> Carl R. Rogers, "The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Therapeutic Personality Change, Journal of Consulting Psychology, vol. 21 (Jan. 1957), pp. 95-103.



therapy and principles have had a very wide impact. The Client-centred approach has focused on "direct facilitation of communication, new awareness, and actual change in relationships - in various situations of interpersonal tension and conflict."<sup>136</sup> However, client-centred therapy has, on the whole, focused more on individual behavior rather than relational or interactional.

The treatment period is relatively brief, compared, for example, to psychoanalysis and some clients are said to have benefited after a few therapy sessions.

Thus, the worker's unconditional positive regard for the client in client-centred intervention process enables the client to freely explore all of his innermost feelings and gain congruence with his organismic self.

#### Functional Approach

The functional approach has been defined as

. . . a human relationship involving a social worker as helper, instrumental to the rendering of an agency's service intended to meet a client's need through a process that maximizes the client's opportunity to use the service effectively.<sup>137</sup>

It originated as a unique response to the Freudian-based, psychoanalytically oriented understanding of human behavior. The functional school developed a significantly different approach to diagnosis and treatment.

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<sup>136</sup>Lennard, op. cit., p. 214.

<sup>137</sup>Harold Lewis, "The Functional Approach to Social Work Practice - A Restatement of Assumptions and Principles, vol. 15, Journal of Social Work, 1965, p. 123.

In the functional approach the worker does not bear the responsibility for the diagnosis or for the outcome of the client-worker relationship, but for his own self-disciplined fostering of the process that enables the client to face freely and maturely the alternatives available to him.

The unique characteristics of the functional approach to social work intervention are found in their

- (1) understanding of the nature of man
- (2) understanding of the purpose of social work and
- (3) understanding of the concept of process in casework<sup>138</sup>

Functional social workers, in considering the nature of man, believe that he is "capable throughout his life of modifying both himself and his environment according to his own changing capacities and environment."<sup>139</sup> Carrying this concept into the casework relationship, the functionalist views the centre of change residing within the client rather than the worker. The worker seeks only to engage the client in a relationship process that will release his own ability for choice and growth.

Functionalists view social casework as a method for . . . administering some specific social service with such psychological understanding of, and skill in the helping process, that the agency service had the best possible chance of being used for individual and social

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<sup>138</sup> Encyclopedia of Social Work, 16th ed. S.V. "Social Casework: The Functional Approach," by Ruth E. Smalley, pp. 1195-1206.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., pp. 1195-1206.

welfare.<sup>140</sup>

Their concept of the casework process is that of a helping process through which an agency's services are made available. The worker enters this relationship with an avowed lack of knowledge of the outcome, believing that only the client and worker together can discover what can be done with the help offered.

Ruth E. Smalley has outlined five principles for the practice of functional social work which are as follows:

Principle 1. That diagnosis, or understanding of the phenomenon served is most effective when it is related to the use of some specific service; when it is developed, in part, in the course of giving the service, with the engagement and participation of the clientele served; when it is recognized as being subject to continuous modification as the phenomenon changes; and when it is put out by the worker for the clientele, to use, as appropriate in the course of treatment.

Principle 2. The effectiveness of any social work process, primary or secondary, is furthered by the worker's conscious knowing use of time phases in the process (beginnings, middles and endings), in order that the particular potential in each time phase may be fully exploited for the other's use.

Principle 3. The use of agency function and function in,

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<sup>140</sup>Ruth E. Smalley, "The Functional Approach to Casework," Theories of Social Casework ed. Robert W. Roberts and Robert H. Nee (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 77-129.

professional role gives focus, content, and direction to social work processes, assures accountability to society and to the agency, and provides the partialization, the concreteness, the "difference," the "given," which furthers productive engagement.

Principle 4. A conscious knowing use of structure, as it evolves from and is related to function and process, introduces "form," which furthers the effectiveness of all the social work processes, both primary and secondary.

Principle 5. All social work processes, to be effective, require the use of relationships to engage the other in making and acting on choices or decisions, as the core of working toward the accomplishment of a purpose, identified as his own, within the purpose of the service being offered.<sup>141</sup>

Thus, functional social work practice emphasizes man as the centre of growth and change in its concept of human growth and development, the social agency as the medium and facilitator for individual growth and positive social change, and social work as helping process with definite time phases, objectives, and structure.

#### Social Work Intervention in Marital Conflict and Dissolution

The social work profession has traditionally been involved and claimed expertise in the field of marriage counselling.

It is our intent to discuss changing trends and issues

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<sup>141</sup>Ibid., pp. 81-82.

within the profession's past and current involvement in situations of marital conflict and dissolution.

In 1956 William Goode published his results obtained from an extensive study of Women in Divorce.<sup>142</sup> At that time he found that only a minority (29 per cent) of the women in his study received help along the lines of marital counselling, and that it was Roman Catholic women and those with a median amount of education who were the most likely to have received it. It is noteworthy that only 4 per cent of those who received marital counselling obtained it from a social work agency. Thus, it does not appear that the social work profession was heavily involved with persons undergoing the crisis of marital breakdown at that time, perhaps reflecting the prevailing societal attitude that divorce was a possible but disapproved solution to marital conflict.

The entire area of marital counselling appears to have been a source of considerable frustration to the profession, as indicated by the 1962 census statistics of the Family Service Association of America.<sup>143</sup> These statistics indicated that nearly half of the marital cases seen by family service workers terminated prematurely at the client's request. Dorothy Fahs Beck described others as coming "too late,"

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<sup>142</sup>William J. Goode, Women in Divorce (New York: The Free Press, 1956).

<sup>143</sup>Dorothy Fahs Beck, "Marital Conflict: Its Course and Treatment as seen by Caseworkers," Social Casework, vol. 47 (April 1966), pp. 211-221.

and those cases proceeded towards divorce without weighing the consequences.

In 1964 Ludwig Geismar established the Family Life Improvement Project, which was a five year longitudinal study based on the assumption that early social work intervention would provide a means of reducing the malfunctioning likely to occur in young families.<sup>144</sup>

The results of the study indicated that social work intervention was helpful in instrumental areas of the family's social functioning, but that the treatment families registered in the subcategory marital relationship made only miniscule gains.

The results of the Family Life Improvement Project, as well as several other well-controlled social work projects, indicated that social work intervention in marital or intra-familial relationships was a less successful area of intervention (e.g. Copenhagen Family Centred Project, New Haven Neighborhood Improvement Project), or was the least successful area of intervention e.g. Chemung County, Vancouver Area Project).<sup>145</sup> As most of the studies above dealt almost

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<sup>144</sup>Ludwig L. Geismar, Early Support for Family Life (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press Inc., 1972), Chpts. 6-9.

<sup>145</sup>P. H. Kuhl, The Family Center Project - Action Research on Socially Deprived Families (Copenhagen: The Danish National Institute of Social Research 1969); L. L. Geismar and Jane Krisberg, The Forgotten Neighborhood (Metuchen N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1967), pp. 318-358; L. I. Bell and Gillian Wilder, "Family Functioning in Multi-Problem Families," in The Area Development Project, Research Monograph III (Vancouver, B.C.: Area Development Project, 1969).

exclusively with socially and economically deprived families, their results generally supported the findings of Levinger's study, mentioned previously, comparing middle and lower class marriages.<sup>146</sup> The studies found that unless the helping persons could successfully help alleviate basic problems of housing, unemployment, and finances that few gains in interpersonal counselling could be achieved.

Geismar's results which questioned the social work profession's expertise in the realm of marriage counselling were further supported by the 1973 Family Service Association Census Statistics.<sup>147</sup> They found that the largest problem in their nation-wide sample was couples with marital problems (67 per cent). However, the treatment outcomes were consistently less favorable for the group with marital problems who were found more likely to terminate on an unplanned basis. They also found that if application for help with a marriage problem was delayed until after the conflict had escalated to the point of separation, both the number of interviews and progress achieved were even less.

In 1972, Alan S. Gurman reviewed the marital treatment outcome studies from 1950 through 1972.<sup>148</sup> From the fifteen studies he located which reported global ratings, he found the average rate of improvement to be 66 per cent. Gurman

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<sup>147</sup>Fahs Beck, "Progress in Family Problems," op. cit.

<sup>148</sup>Alan S. Gurman, "The Effects and Effectiveness of Marital Therapy: A Review of Outcome Research," Family Process, vol. 12 (June 1973), pp. 145-170.

noted that the studies he had located were typically methodologically weak and based on extremely small samples. He concluded that "although the practice of marital therapy has been with us for some time, the empirical investigation of this important area of clinical service is still at the earliest stages of development."<sup>149</sup>

David H. Olson, Elizabeth S. Goodman, and Moritz Lebedun have also reviewed the literature and agreed that the meagre research available on marriage counselling is methodologically weak.<sup>150</sup>

However Dorothy Fahs Beck's recent review of forty interdisciplinary studies of marriage counselling described much more positive outcomes than the previous research findings.<sup>151</sup> Although she acknowledged the difficulties social workers experience in trying to help spouses with marital difficulties (as revealed by the 1973 census conducted by the Family Service Association of America), her review of the highly variant studies found significant

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>150</sup> David H. Olson, "Marital and Family Therapy: Integrative Review and Critique," Journal of Marriage and the Family, vol. 32 (Nov. 1970), pp. 501-538; Elizabeth S. Goodman, "The History of Marriage Counselling Research: A Quantitative Study," Ph.D. diss. University of New Hampshire, 1972; "idem, Marriage Counselling as Science: Some Research Consideration," The Family Coordinator, vol. 22 (Jan. 1973), pp. 111-116; Moritz Lebedun, "Measuring Movement in Group Marital Counseling," Social Casework, vol. 51 (Jan. 1970), pp. 35-43.

<sup>151</sup> Dorothy Fahs Beck, "Research Findings on the Outcomes of Marital Counselling," Social Casework, vol. 56 (March 1975), pp. 153-181.



improvement in marital functioning, regardless of the type of measure used.

Fahs Beck's conclusions, which appeared in direct contradiction to the results of Geismar's Family Life project and other similar projects, gained more congruence when the population sample was taken into consideration. She noted that the suitability of the newer modalities for the less educated, more disadvantaged, clients had not yet been adequately tested, "as the authors whose studies were based on nonclinical populations typically described their volunteers as young, white, relative well-educated, middle-class couples."<sup>152</sup> Thus, it would appear that present marital counselling techniques have more positive outcomes with middle-class clients than with lower class clients. Again Fahs Beck's review supported the findings of Levinger's comparison study on lower and middle-class marriages.<sup>153</sup>

There have been a number of articles written which attempt to describe reasons behind the success and failure of marital counselling.

Gerald Manus described marriage counselling as a technique in search of a theory.<sup>154</sup> He maintained that it

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<sup>152</sup>Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>153</sup>Levinger, op. cit., pp. 803-807.

<sup>154</sup>Gerald Manus, "Marriage Counselling: A Technique in Search of a Theory," Journal of Marriage and the Family vol. 28 (Nov. 1966), pp. 449-453.

had developed from social need and there was as yet no consistent theoretical underpinning for its service. He felt that neurotic interaction, social casework theory, communication theory, symbolic interaction, and role theory had all been invoked to provide the rationales for marital counselling. However, he had found no attempt to integrate these theories on either empirical or logical grounds, and he felt the practice of marriage counselling would suffer until such attempts were made.

In 1969, Le Masters published the results of his study on unsuccessful marriages.<sup>155</sup> He traced the history of thirty-six couples caught in a chain of marital conflict that had extended over at least ten years of time. He found that seventy-five percent were suffering from some form of personal disorganization, most frequently—alcoholism, psychosomatic illness, neurotic-psychotic behavior, occupational disorganization, extra-marital affairs, disenchantment. Fourteen of the couples studied had gone for help and Le Masters found that the professionals were in general committed to keeping the couples together. He questioned why more effort was not directed towards helping the couples dissolve their essentially destructive relationships. Le Masters suspected the practitioners may have been reflecting a cultural bias in their counselling efforts, and viewed the function of the counsellor as being to keep the marriage

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<sup>155</sup>E. E. Le Masters, "Holy Deadlock: A Study of Unsuccessful Marriages, Marriage and the Family in the Modern World, ed. Ruth S. Cavan (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1969), pp. 434-441.

intact no matter what the costs.

We found this cultural bias pervading the very framework of studies designed to measure the success or failure of marital counselling. For example, the study done by Freeman, Leavens, and McCulloch on forty-one couples who had received counselling for marital conflict defined success in marital counselling as bringing about an improvement in marriage as seen by both the couple and the therapist.<sup>156</sup> A healthy dissolution of a destructive marital relationship would not have been considered a successful therapeutic intervention, based on the study's criterion.

However, there has been a recent trend in the literature on marital counselling which indicates that some social workers have been attempting to respond to client needs rather than societal values. Dorothy Fahs Beck's comments on the results of the 1973 Family Service statistics reflect this changing attitude. She stated that,

... from the findings it was obvious that the success of marital counselling cannot be judged on whether or not a marriage is saved. Break-up may not be in question, may be unavoidable, or may be in the best interests of all concerned. To measure outcomes in terms of prevention of break-up would put pressures on counselors to violate two basic professional principles: the clients right to autonomy and the counselor's obligation to work solely in the best interests of his clients.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> S. J. J. Freeman and E. J. Leavens McCulloch, "Factors Associated with Success or Failure in Marital Counselling," Family Coordinator, vol. 18 (Feb. 1969), pp. 125-128.

<sup>157</sup> Dorothy Fahs Beck, Progress in Family Problems, op. cit., p. 152.

Different approaches to marital counselling have been emerging from this changing professional attitude. Bartoletti believes that the purpose of counselling, when persons are contemplating separation or divorce, is to help these people move apart with a minimum of pain to themselves.<sup>158</sup> He utilizes an approach called the Support System in his separation counselling, which is

. . . designed to help couples through the phases of working out a separation agreement in layman's language, while simultaneously insuring adequate emotional support to both partners and their children, along with competent legal assistance as well.<sup>159</sup>

Aspects of the Support System are (1) the agreement is usually arranged for a temporary period of six months; (2) it eliminates delicate financial negotiations; (3) continuing joint custody of the children is strongly encouraged to give both parents the opportunity to continue to be meaningfully involved in their parental responsibilities; and (4) the couple is encouraged to maintain contact with their worker during the separation period, to forestall emotional depression and/or the cooperative stance of the couple. The lawyer within the Support System functions as a legal consultant to both the wife and husband but represents neither because the husband and wife are not in conflict.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>158</sup>Marlo D. Bartoletti, "Separation: Perspective on the Couple, the Counsellor, and the Lawyer," The Single Parent (September, 1974), pp. 4-29.

<sup>159</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>160</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

Bartoletti views support counselling as a

. . . . system designed to protect the couple from unnecessary and potentially destructive legal litigation and court fights by the simple device of assisting the couple to retain as much control of their situation as possible.<sup>161</sup>

With this revised approach to separation, Bartoletti views the natural progression of alternatives available to the couple as (1) the Support System, (2) the Adversary System, (3) the Court System. Bartoletti has recently produced a film (in association with the Ontario Education and Communications Authority) with an accompanying text designed for use by counsellors and lawyers familiar with the three alternative approaches. A training program designed around the film is also under development through the Programme on the Family at York University.<sup>162</sup>

Marjorie Toomin also advocates separation counselling as a structured approach to dealing with marital crises.<sup>163</sup> She outlines separation counselling as a form of crisis intervention which deals specifically with the immediate crisis of family separation. The goal of this form of counselling is to "help separating individuals understand their relationship, resolve their conflicts, decide whether their future relationship will be together or apart, and

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>163</sup> Marjorie Kavin Toomin, "Separation Counselling: A Structured Approach to Marital Crisis," Therapeutic Needs of the Family ed. Richard E. Hardy and John G. Cull (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas Pub., 1974), pp. 148-167.

grow through the separation process."<sup>164</sup>

The major assumption upon which ~~this~~ mode of intervention is based is that a meaningful relationship, once established, can never be altogether lost. It can only be changed.

In Toomin's approach to separation counselling, she asks the separating couple to make a three month commitment to explore themselves and the relationship. During this period they continue to see the worker, both individually and conjointly, optimally once a week. They are asked not to live in the same house, not to see a lawyer, or to make any permanent financial, property, or child custody arrangements.

Toomin outlines three major areas on which the worker should focus during the structured separation period. These are (1) the individual's response to separation, (2) the individual's basic quality of being, and (3) the together-relationship.<sup>165</sup>

In separation counselling, emphasis is placed on the following factors: "dependency and control needs and conflicts; the range of feelings available to the individual and how they are expressed; risk taking behavior; ways of coping with loss; reactions to freedom; and value systems."<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

Toomin found, on a one-year follow-up of 18 couples who completed structured separation with counselling, that 6 reinstated their marriage and were satisfied with the new relationship and 12 divorced. Of these 12 only one couple needed legal help in making a property settlement. All but one of the couples have maintained good feelings toward each other and all feel they made the right choice.

Esther Fisher suggests that the term marriage counselling is too restricted and advances the term marriage and divorce counsellor as a replacement. She describes the focus of divorce counselling as being on "the diminuation and final dissolution of the marital relationship with concern for the intrapsychic needs of the individual spouses."<sup>167</sup>

The general goal of this mode of intervention is . . . for divorcing and divorced spouses to gain insight into and understanding of their personal and marital conflicts and difficulties; together with enough emotional strength to make decisions and deal more adequately and responsibly with the problems consequent to the absolution of their marital relationship.<sup>168</sup>

Fisher divides the therapeutic process into three phases: pre-divorce counselling, divorce counselling, and post-divorce counselling.

Pre-divorce counselling focuses on the decision whether to divorce or not. The marriage and divorce counsellor functions as a catalyst, whose purpose is to help the spouses

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<sup>167</sup> Esther O. Fisher, "A Guide to Divorce Counselling," The Family Coordinator, vol. 22 (Jan. 1973), p. 56.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

explore and come to grips with their difficulties. He must seek "to accomplish a quick order out of chaos, be quite reality-oriented, ready to temporarily lend his ego, and take responsibility for more directive, directional, and dynamic techniques than are usually considered appropriate in counselling."<sup>169</sup>

Fisher believes that the worker's own attitudes and values about marriage and divorce will play a dynamic and intrinsic part in the decisions his clients will make; however she believes the ultimate decision to divorce belongs to the client.

The second phase of Fisher's therapeutic process is divorce counselling per se. This phase commences when the lawyers become officially involved and continues until a legal divorce is obtained.

The goal of this phase of intervention is to reduce negative destructive interaction between spouses and minimize their feelings of guilt and revenge, which would hinder their reaching a reasonable and viable settlement agreement. A special goal is also to prevent much emotional injury to the child and aggravation of the already disturbed parent-child interaction.

This phase of divorce counselling requires many strengths from the worker—"patience, warmth, support, an ability to interpret what is going on legally and practically,

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<sup>169</sup>Ibid., p. 57.



and compassionate concern for the clients' suffering to be, together with a fine clinical awareness of the pathology involved."<sup>170</sup>

Fisher has found in her experience that workers have a general lack of knowledge about the law and lawyers. She advocates increased communication between workers and lawyers on the assumption that the more the worker understands the lawyer's role in divorce, the more supportive and helpful he can be to the client.

The third phase of divorce counselling begins when the divorce decree is obtained. In the therapeutic phase of post-divorce counselling the goals are (1) to enable the divorced person to become his own judge of what is good and bad, wise and unwise, and develop a role for himself; and (2) to help the divorced person to build his own structure within the framework of social standards in regard to behavior, beliefs, and values, with recognition of differences in sub-cultures and among individuals.<sup>171</sup>

During this period the client, in attempting to clarify his own values and understand their application in reality, will challenge the worker's values. Fisher maintains that the worker will have the responsibility at times to openly state his values.

Thus Fisher advocates the use of Divorce Counselling as

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

. . . a therapeutic process by which those who experience and continue to experience the pain and humiliation of divorce can be helped toward personal growth and adjustment enabling them to move away from egocentricity toward altruism and a desire to contribute to society.<sup>172</sup>

Another promising trend has also been the growth of Conciliation Courts which involve Social Work counselling services being directly affiliated with the Family Courts.<sup>173</sup> The goal of Conciliation courts is not to save all marriages, but to avoid the tragedy of unnecessary divorce.

Meyer Elkin, in his article on the Conciliation Court in Los Angeles, cites the common denominator among the clientele of the Conciliation Court as being in a crisis situation.<sup>174</sup> To deal effectively with the couples' experiencing a crisis in their marital relationships, the Conciliation Court provides short-contact, here-and-now, reality-oriented, crisis marriage counselling. The court defines short-contact counselling as one to six sessions, during which the couples are seen both conjointly and individually.

The Los Angeles Conciliation Court also has a short-contact group counselling program. Each group, "conducted by co-counsellors, consists of five couples (married to each other) meeting once a week for six consecutive weeks for one

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>173</sup> Meyer Elkin, "Conciliation Courts: The Reintegration of Disintegrating Families," The Family Coordinator, vol. 22 (Jan. 1973), pp. 63-71.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

and a half sessions."<sup>175</sup>

Within the short intervention span, Elkin deems it necessary that the worker engage in sharp diagnostic thinking, be more directive, and make greater use of confrontation than workers involved in intervention over a more extended period of time.

Elkin cites one of the special characteristics of the Conciliation Court's service as being its constructive use of authority. He believes that the authority of the court enables the worker to surround the collapsing marriage with some external structure, thereby facilitating the process of short-contact marital counselling.

The growth and development of Conciliation courts across United States and Canada is currently being aided by the sharing of information and experience through the journal entitled the Conciliation Courts Review and through the annual Conference of Conciliation Courts.

The National Council on Family Relations in Minnesota, U.S.A. has recently established a task force on Divorce and Divorce Reform.<sup>176</sup> They have already completed one Task Force Report, published a newsletter, and hold workshops on divorce. They are currently in the process of collecting information on Divorce and are establishing a library which will be accessible to professionals and others working in

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Chestertown (Maryland) Newsletter, NCFR Task Force on Divorce and Divorce Reform, February, 1975.

this area.

Thus, despite the social work profession's somewhat frustrating struggle towards obtaining expertise in the field of marriage counselling there are now trends away from "keeping the marriage together at all costs," towards serving the clients best interests—be it strengthening the marriage, separation, or divorce.

### Summary and Synthesis

We have discussed changing trends in marital and family life, sociological and psychological factors contributing to marital breakdown, the separation process, the basic modes of social work intervention, as well as changing trends and issues in the social work profession's involvement in situations of marital conflict and dissolution. These areas were discussed in detail to provide a clearer picture of social work intervention in the marital separation process.

The first four sections in the review of literature outlined the various factors contributing to an increase in marital breakdown, and described the process of marital separation in the context of crisis theory. It appeared from our review of changing trends in marriage and family lifestyles that increasing demands and pressures from society placed upon the modern family and its subsequent adaptations have contributed to the increase in marital separations. The most significant variables to marital stability outlined by

sociological research were social class, occupation, economic position, education level, and age. The results of the research indicated that as the partners' positions in each of these categories decreased, the likelihood of marital breakdown increased. Although the factors of race, pre-marital pregnancy, and sexual responsiveness have not been researched as extensively as the above factors, the results of the sociological studies available indicate that they also affect marital stability. The factors found to be most significant from the psychological perspective were role complementarity and satisfaction of needs and communication. The results of the research indicated that as one or more of these factors decreased the likelihood of marital breakdown increased.

In view of the upsurge in the number of marital separations and divorces, we noted the theoretical and empirical neglect of the marital separation process in the social work literature. However, based on the scant information available, we outlined the separation process in the context of crisis theory. Categorized as an unanticipated or situational crisis, marital separation was viewed as a process with a potential to either promote or stifle mental health, depending upon the internal and external support available during its active phase. It appeared from this information that social work intervention could ideally aid family members during the crisis of marital separation to re-establish a healthy and growth-promoting equilibrium. However, it appeared that in order to provide

effective intervention, social workers should be aware of the sociological and psychological factors affecting marital separation, as well as be familiar with the dynamics of the separation process.

The final two sections of the review of the literature provided an overview of pertinent modes of social work intervention, upon which was based a discussion of changing trends and issues regarding the social work profession's past and current involvement in situations of marital conflict and dissolution. The intervention models outlined were Psychosocial, Problem-Solving, Crisis Intervention, Social Group Work (including Social Goals Model, Reciprocal model, and the Remedial Model), Behavior Modification, Family Therapy (including the Psychoanalytic approach, Communicative-Interactive Approach, and the Integrative Approach), Transactional Analysis, Client-Centred, and the Functional Approach.

At present, research into the expertise of the social work profession in marital counselling has been inadequate, and in separation counselling has been almost nil. Current research in the field of marital counselling has shown social workers to be fairly effective in counselling middle-class persons in marital conflict, but relatively ineffectual in counselling couples from the lower class. It also appeared that current research on the effectiveness of marriage counselling was biased in favour of keeping marriages together.

Recent trends in social work intervention towards

separation and divorce counselling indicate that the profession is adapting to meet the changing needs of marital couples. We concluded our review by outlining current intervention modes designed to help couples work through the crisis of marital separation.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

As the review of literature in the previous chapter would indicate, marital separation can lead either to a successful resolution of chronic marital conflict or to an escalation of personal and familial turmoil.

Sociologists have delineated the sociological factors involved in marital breakdown. Psychiatrists, social workers, and psychologists have studied and discussed the psychodynamics of marital breakdown. Marriage counsellors have outlined the practice methods that they utilize in helping spouses to reconcile. There is, however, a dearth of literature outlining the process that marital couples undergo when attempts at reconciliation fail and separation appears to be the only appropriate recourse. This lack of information on the marital separation process would appear to be all the more crucial when one assesses the changing trends in marriage and family.

With this in mind we decided to explore the methods of social work intervention used in helping spouses through the separation process. More specifically, the objectives of the study were to survey

1. The theoretical orientations



2. The methods of intervention

3. The attitudes of social workers who were assisting spouses in the act of marital separation in the Windsor area

#### Definitions of Concepts

In order to study the above research questions in a reliable manner, the basic concepts to be used were operationally defined.

Theoretical orientation refers to the conceptual framework developed and used by the social worker in understanding the client and the client's situation around the problematic marital relationship.

The methods of intervention refer to the discussions and activities used by the worker in helping the client achieve resolution of the emotional crisis surrounding marital separation.

Attitudes of social workers refer to those attitudes and values directly related and influential to the delivery of service to clients undergoing marital separation.

For the purpose of this study, the term social worker denotes any person holding (a) a Master of Social Work degree, (b) a Bachelor of Social Work degree, (c) a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major emphasis in social science, (d) a certificate in social welfare from a community college, or (e) an equivalent of any of the above.

Similarly, for purposes of this study, marital separation refers to the emotional and social process of living

apart from one's spouse with the intention of temporarily or permanently terminating the marital relationship. This process may include the utilization of community resources (e.g. day care, housing, finances, courts) to make such a separate existence possible.

### Design

On having reviewed the literature and formulated the research questions, we decided that the exploratory descriptive study was the most appropriate design to use. Literature on the marital separation process was not thorough or comprehensive enough to develop hypotheses or research questions that could be tested. Studies on social work intervention in the marital separation process were non-existent, leaving no research questions that could be followed up.

Selltiz stated that some of the functions of exploratory studies are

Increasing the investigator's familiarity with the phenomena he wishes to investigate in a subsequent, more highly structured study, or with the setting in which he plans to carry out such a study; clarifying concepts; establishing priorities for further research; . . . providing a census of problems regarded as urgent by people working in a given field of social relations.<sup>177</sup>

The exploratory descriptive design allowed sufficient flexibility to permit us to gain original or unexpected

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<sup>177</sup>Claire Selltiz, Marie Jahoda, Morton Deutsch and Stuart W. Cook, Research Methods in Social Relations (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1951), p. 51.

information. Sampling procedures and data collection instruments could be designed in such a manner that informed social workers helping spouses through marital separation could be contacted.

#### Study Population and Sampling Procedure

If the research questions of this study were to be answered adequately, a survey of social work intervention in the marital separation process would need to be both concise and comprehensive. It was important, therefore, to develop a sample of participants whose theoretical orientations, practice methods and social work attitudes would be extensive and intensive enough to provide new insights and concepts. Only after a thorough understanding of the concepts, methods, and attitudes involved in marital separation counselling had been acquired could the degree to which social workers applied these concepts and methods be tested.

Our initial task was, therefore, to select social workers involved in marital separation counselling who worked out of a theoretical framework and who had developed appropriate methods of intervention. This task was complicated by the fact that social workers involved in marital separation counselling were not distinguished from those who were not. As such, the clearest criterion available for choosing participants was the selection of social workers according to agencies serving clients in the process of marital separation. Such settings included Child Welfare

Agencies, Family Service Agencies, Child Guidance Clinics, Hospital Social Service Departments, and Community and Social Service Departments.

We decided to send the data collection instrument to all social workers practising in the above named settings within the Windsor area. It was also decided to utilize the responses within the instrument itself to differentiate between workers with varying levels of experience and knowledge. Such a procedure would enable contact with a maximum number of social workers having expertise in marital separation counselling. The procedure would not, however, guarantee a response from all workers to whom the instrument was sent. Neither would it clearly indicate what percentage of those who failed to respond had no experience in marital separation counselling.

We were able to contact and solicit the cooperation of the administrative heads of the previously mentioned agencies. Names of ninety-four social work employees were received and used as our study population. The data collection instruments were either distributed and collected by agency personnel or sent and returned by mail. Agencies demonstrating low rates of return were contacted three weeks subsequent to the time of distribution. Additional questionnaires were distributed where appropriate.

Response from the social workers involved in the study was encouraging. The support of the agency directors was probably an important factor in the high rate of return.

### Data Collection Instrument

According to Selltitz et al., the literature and experiential surveys are an integral part of the exploratory study. They are valuable methods of obtaining the data required. Other instruments of data collection may include the examination of existing files, participant observation, the unstructured or structured interview, the questionnaire, or the manipulation of particular variables within a sample. All of these data collection instruments are utilized in such a manner that relevant yet exhaustive information on the topic is obtained. They do not need to be applied to a representative sample.<sup>178</sup>

We have reviewed the literature and conducted an initial experiential survey. Information in existing files does not usually provide explicit objective data on the worker's theoretical orientation or social work attitudes. Participant observation would be appropriate only in a longitudinal study where phases of the separation process could be outlined or compared. The structured or unstructured interview would be appropriate if the sample was small and composed of participants knowledgeable in the marital separation process. Since we have found it difficult to select initially such knowledgeable participants, the questionnaire appeared to be the most appropriate data collection instrument to use.

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<sup>178</sup>Selltitz et al., Research Methods in Social Relations, pp. 53-59.

We found it difficult to devise a questionnaire that would provide the information needed and yet facilitate a high rate of return. The difficulty arose from the complexity of the topic, the personal nature of the questions asked, and the thought required to answer the questions adequately. Although both open-ended and pre-coded questions were used, it is likely that the information obtained was influenced by (1) the respondents' interest in, and knowledge of, the subject matter; (2) the time available to answer the questionnaire; and (3) the respondents' disposition toward the purpose and intent of the research project itself.

It was hoped, however, that the data obtained would be instrumental in furthering understanding of marital separation counselling. Findings from this study would hopefully provide a foundation for subsequent, more intensive studies.

#### Analysis of Data

All of the scales used in the questionnaire were of nominal and ordinal nature. As such, analysis of the data included use of the mode, the median, the Guttman coefficient of predictability ( $\lambda$ ), the Kendall Tau coefficient of ordinal association, and the coefficient of differentiation ( $\theta$ ).

#### Assumptions

Norman A. Polansky's definition of an assumption is relevant to our discussion. He stated

An assumption is a proposition that is taken as given in the particular investigation. Three major types of assumptions which have different implications in relation to problem formulation are . . . those concerning values, those concerning variables of a general nature not particular to the specific investigation, and those concerning variables germane to the subject matter of the particular investigation.

The assumptions specifically related to our study were

(1) that marital separation may be the only appropriate recourse for spouses who are unable to reconcile differences

(2) that marital separation is a critical period in the life of separating spouses

(3) that marital separation has the potential of resolving or escalating marital conflict

(4) that social work intervention can be of assistance to spouses who are separating

(5) that social work practitioners in the Windsor area have information on marital separation that can be conceptualized

(6) that social work practice regarding marital separation reflects the changing trends in marriage and family today

Statements (1) to (6) were tested by the questionnaire in Part III.

#### Limitations of the Design of the Study

Because of a variety of factors (e.g. cost, time

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<sup>179</sup>Norman A. Polansky, ed., Social Work Research (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 35.

accessibility), each study has inherent limitations. This study appears to manifest the following limitations:

(1) A general lack of available literature on the marital separation process from which to develop an in depth data collection instrument

(2) Insufficient time to permit a comparative analysis between the clients' expressed need during marital separation and social work intervention regarding that need

(3) Lack of a systematic method of selecting social workers with a high level of knowledge and experience, to enrich our experiential survey

(4) Lack of consensus among social workers on how to operationally define the variable setting

The purpose and methodology of this study focused on the theoretical orientations, practice methods, and attitudes of Windsor's social workers. The degree to which the results could be generalized to workers practicing in other geographic areas would be dependent on a variety of factors including the clients served, the policies of the agencies involved, and the experience of the social workers concerned.

The data collection instrument posed questions directly related to our review of the literature. The coded questions may have restricted idiosyncrasies or originality in response while they improved reliability. Open ended questions and a final section of the questionnaire reserved for comments hopefully allowed for and solicited individualized comments that were not permitted elsewhere.



## CHAPTER IV

### STATISTICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Of the 94 questionnaires sent to professional social workers practising in Windsor's hospitals, Family Service Bureaus, Children's Aid Societies, and Community and Social Service Departments, 61 were returned and utilized for data compilation and analysis. An additional 6 respondents indicated that they lacked either the experience or knowledge necessary to complete the questionnaire. Altogether, 71.3 per cent of the population responded in some manner to the material that was distributed to them.

Computation of the data was facilitated by the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Computer Program. Seven questionnaires were, however, not completed sufficiently to be utilized in this manner. The remaining 54 responses yielded the following information.

Fourteen (25.9 per cent) of the respondents reported their setting as Family Service, 30 (55.6 per cent) as Child Welfare, 7 (13.0 per cent) as Hospital, and 3 (5.6 per cent) as Community and Social Service. The distinction between Family Service and Child Welfare appears to have been somewhat confusing, with more persons describing their setting as Family Service than the two local Bureaus actually employ. Perhaps this was a result of the existence of Family Service

Departments within the Child Welfare Agencies themselves.

Of the respondents, 63 per cent reported the religious perspective of their agency as non sectarian, and 37 per cent reported it as Roman Catholic. These figures compared favorably with the actual percentage of Windsor's social workers practising in non sectarian and Roman Catholic agencies (57.5 per cent and 42.5 per cent respectively).

In terms of professional education, our population included 28 (51.9 per cent) persons holding a Master of Social Work Degree, 18 (33.3 per cent) holding a Bachelor of Social Work Degree, 6 (11.1 per cent) persons holding a B.A. Degree, and 2 (3.7 per cent) persons holding degrees other than those described above.

The percentage of the population holding Master of Social Work Degrees initially appeared to be comparatively high. The findings, however, compared favorably with Lanigan and Mitchell's study of Windsor's social worker population, in which 65.1 per cent of the social workers held Master of Social Work Degrees and 30.2 per cent held Bachelor of Social Work Degrees.<sup>180</sup> A cross tabulation of setting with level of education (Appendix 3) indicated a distribution of persons with Master and Bachelor of Social Work Degrees among the various agencies comparable to that of the actual social work population under consideration.

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<sup>180</sup>Michael H. Lanigan and Rodger W. Mitchell, "An Exploratory-Descriptive Study of the Termination Phase in Social Work Practice," (M.S.W. Thesis, University of Windsor, 1974), p. 61.

Tables 1 to 3 on the following pages describe the years of practice of the respondents in a social work setting, the years of experience of the respondents in working with marital separation or divorce, and the number of cases involving marital separation counselling actually seen.

Table 1 indicates that 35.2 per cent of the respondents had up to 2 years of practice and 51.9 per cent of the respondents had up to 4 years of practice in a social work setting. The number of respondents decreased as the years of practice increased until the 11 to 15 years bracket was reached. The 20.4 per cent of the respondents with more than 11 years of practice in a social work setting was perhaps representative of the senior administrative or supervisory personnel in the various agencies.

TABLE 1

## YEARS OF PRACTICE IN A SOCIAL WORK SETTING

Years of Practice	Number	Percent	Cumulative Frequency
up to 2	19	35.2	35.2
2 to 4	9	16.7	51.9
5 to 6	8	14.8	66.7
7 to 8	4	7.4	74.1
9 to 10	3	5.6	79.6
11 to 15	6	11.1	90.7
more than 15	5	9.3	100.0
Total	54	100.0	100.0

TABLE 2

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN WORKING WITH  
MARITAL SEPARATION OR DIVORCE

Years of Experience	Number	Percent	Cumulative Frequency
up to 2	24	14.4	44.4
2 to 4	14	25.9	70.4
5 to 6	4	7.4	77.8
7 to 8	3	5.6	83.3
9 to 10	4	7.4	90.7
11 to 15	3	5.6	96.3
more than 15	2	3.7	100.0
Total	54	100.0	100.0

TABLE 3

NUMBER OF CASES INVOLVING MARITAL SEPARATION  
COUNSELLING WITH WHICH RESPONDENTS WORKED

Number of Cases	Number	Percent	Cumulative Frequency
less than 25	29	61.7	61.7
26 to 50	5	10.6	72.3
51 to 100	7	14.9	87.2
101 to 200	1	2.1	89.4
more than 200	5	10.6	100.0
Total	47	100.0	100.0

Note: 7 observations were described as missing.

Table 2 shows a pattern similar to Table 1 with 44.4 per cent of the respondents having up to 2 years and 70.4 per cent of the respondents having up to 4 years experience in working with marital separation. In Table 2, however, the number of respondents decreased as the years of experience increased, without the apparent upturn in the 11 to 15 years bracket. This again may have indicated that some of the respondents with 11 or more years of practice in a social work setting had replaced active experience in marital separation counselling with supervisory or administrative functions as their years of practice increased.

Table 3 (Number of Cases Involving Marital Separation with which Respondents Worked) demonstrates no consistent pattern. Sixty-one point seven per cent of the respondents indicated that they had worked with less than 25 cases. Fourteen point nine percent of the workers indicated that they had worked with 51 to 100 cases. Ten point six per cent of the population reported working with 26 to 50 cases. Another 10.6 per cent reported working with more than 200 cases. 2.1 per cent (respondent) reported working with 101 to 200 cases.

Although the degree of association between data in Table 3 and Tables 1 and 2 may have been affected by the differing classification of observations in Table 3 from that in Tables 1 and 2, the number of cases involving marital separation counselling with which respondents had been involved may also have been affected by the settings in which

they were employed. Child Welfare or Community and Social Service personnel, for instance, might have seen a proportionally higher number of separating couples than Family Service or Hospital personnel. Data obtained by our instrument, however, was not refined enough to give a clear indication of any association between setting and the number of cases that respondents had seen.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>181</sup>Use of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient indicated a high positive relation between years of practice and years of experience (0.8573). It indicated a somewhat lower positive relation between the number of cases with which the respondent was involved and the years of experience (0.5360) or years of practice gained (0.3870).

## CHAPTER V

### PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Each of the respondents was requested to answer questions referring to the theoretical orientation of their practice, the concepts and techniques used, and the philosophical perspective or attitudes associated with helping couples through the process of marital separation. The following sections will report on the data that was collected.

#### Theoretical Orientation

Each respondent was requested to rate nine briefly defined models of intervention according to the frequency with which they were utilized in his or her practice. Table 4 summarizes the data that was received. Tables 4a and 4b were abstracted from Table 4 to facilitate analysis and discussion.

The nine models of intervention were initially ranked (see Table 4) according to the values of their medians. As such the crisis intervention model surpassed the problem solving model by .079 points. Table 4a, however, indicates that 33.3 per cent of the respondents used the crisis intervention model very frequently and 51.9 per cent used it frequently, while 24.1 per cent used the problem solving

TABLE 4

## FREQUENCY OF UTILIZATION OF THEORETICAL MODELS

Theoretical Models	(5) very frequently		(4) frequently		(3) unable to rate		(2) in-frequently		(1) very in-frequently		Rank	median
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Crisis Intervention	18	33.3	28	51.9	3	5.6	5	9.3	0	0.0	1	4.179
Problem Solving	13	24.1	35	64.8	3	5.6	3	5.6	0	0.0	2	4.100
Client Centered	8	14.8	33	61.1	5	9.3	4	7.4	4	7.4	3	3.924
Family Therapy	10	18.5	26	48.1	5	9.3	11	20.4	2	3.7	4	3.846
Psychosocial	6	11.1	20	37.0	6	11.1	14	25.9	8	14.8	5	3.333
Functional	6	11.1	19	35.2	9	16.7	8	14.8	12	22.2	6	3.278
Behavior Modification	1	1.9	11	20.4	9	16.7	19	35.2	14	25.9	7	2.184
Transactional Analysis	1	1.9	9	16.7	7	13.0	19	35.2	18	33.3	8	1.974
Group Work	2	3.7	7	13.0	10	18.5	8	14.8	27	50.0	9	1.500

(X) denotes value given to response



TABLE 4a

## FREQUENCY OF UTILIZATION OF THEORETICAL MODELS

Theoretical Models	Very Frequently %	Frequently %	Row Total %
Crisis Intervention	33.3	51.9	85.2
Problem Solving	24.1	64.8	88.9
Client Centered	14.3	61.1	75.9
Family Therapy	18.5	48.1	66.6
Psychosocial	11.1	37.0	48.1
Functional	11.1	35.2	46.3
Behavior Modification	11.9	20.4	22.3
Transactional Analysis	1.9	16.7	18.6
Group Work	3.7	13.0	16.7

TABLE 4b

## FREQUENCY OF UTILIZATION OF THEORETICAL MODELS

Theoretical Model	in- frequently %	very in- frequently %	Row Total %
Crisis Intervention	9.3	0.0	9.3
Problem Solving	5.6	0.0	5.6
Client Centered	7.4	7.4	14.8
Family Therapy	20.4	3.7	24.1
Psychosocial	25.9	14.8	40.7
Functional	14.8	22.2	37.0
Behavior Modification	35.2	25.9	61.1
Transactional Analysis	35.2	33.3	68.5
Group Work	14.8	50.0	64.8

model very frequently and 64.8 per cent used it frequently. If the percentages of respondents using the two models either frequently or very frequently were totalled, the problem solving model surpassed the crisis intervention model by 3.7 percentage points.

A somewhat similar situation to that above occurred with the ranking of the client centered and family therapy models. In this situation, however, only the ranking for the respondents using the two models very frequently was reversed.

An examination of the observations classified under the category of "unable to rate" indicated that the observations generally increased as the frequency of the utilization of various models decreased. The increase in the observations in this category as the ranking proceeded from 1 to 9 (12.9 per cent) was, however, not pronounced. The possibility of considering the values assigned to this category as being constant was, therefore, worth mentioning.

An examination of table 4b showed no inconsistencies in the rank ordering of the various models except for the functional and group work models. Of the respondents, 37.0 per cent utilized the functional model infrequently or very infrequently, while 40.7 per cent used the psychosocial approach accordingly. The medians for the responses to the two models indicated a clear but small distinction between the psychosocial (3.333) and the functional (3.278) approaches.

Similarly, 14.8 per cent and 50.0 per cent of the respondents utilized the group work model infrequently or very infrequently, in contrast to 35.2 per cent and 33.3 per cent of the respondents using the transactional analysis model either infrequently or very infrequently. The 14.8 per cent of the respondents using the group work model infrequently was, however, contrasted by the 50.0 per cent of the respondents using the same model very infrequently.

Tables 4, 4a, and 4b, therefore, indicates a small but distinctly decreasing frequency of utilization of the different theoretical models as the category progressed from the crisis intervention model through to the group work model. Although various exceptions were evident, each category demonstrated a consistent increase or decrease in value as the theoretical models category moved from one model to the other.

Table 4, therefore, appears to indicate that crisis intervention, problem solving, and client centered were the three models most frequently used by social workers in the various settings, while behavior modification, transactional analysis, and group work were the least frequently used models of intervention. The psychosocial model (the fifth on the list) appeared to be used about as frequently (48.1 per cent) as it was used infrequently (40.7 per cent).

Two respondents reported using Gestalt therapy frequently, and 1 reported using it very frequently. One respondent reported using existential psychotherapy frequently, while

another reported using reality therapy. One respondent indicated utilization of his or her Christian faith very frequently.

The family therapy model and the functional model were used more frequently than they were used infrequently.

The frequent use of the crisis intervention and problem solving models appeared to be consistent with our Review of the Literature, which indicated that marital separation was a situational crisis most amenable to models of intervention that dealt directly with the crisis. The frequent use of the client centered approach perhaps was associated with the social worker's acceptance of and support for the client in his or her emotional upset.

### Concepts and Techniques

Each of the respondents was asked to indicate the manner in which he or she most typically interviewed the family members regarding the marital conflict prior to the act of separation. None of the respondents indicated that they saw the husband alone, 7 (15.2 per cent) indicated that they saw the wife alone, 35 (76.1 per cent) indicated that they saw the husband and wife together, and 4 (8.7 per cent) stated that they saw the family as a unit. Eight observations were reported as "other" or "missing." (see Table 5).

Two respondents, classified as other, stated that they preferred to see the wife and husband separately, one

TABLE 5

FAMILY MEMBERS SEEN REGARDING MARITAL  
CONFLICT PRIOR TO MARITAL SEPARATION

Family Members	#	%	Cumulative Frequency
see husband alone	0	0	0
see wife alone	7	15.2	15.2
see husband and wife together	35	76.1	91.3
see family as a unit	4	8.7	100.0
other	8	missing	missing
Totals	54	100.0	100.0

preferred to have at least an initial interview with the family as a unit, three preferred to see the couple together, but would see the husband and wife separately as a second choice, and two others wrote of the importance of seeing the children separately from their parents.

A cross tabulation of the manner in which the clients were seen by the setting of the social worker's practice indicated that a large majority of the social workers in all four settings had interviewed the husband and wife together prior to the actual separation. (see Table 6). This practice would again appear to be supported by our Review of the Literature which defined marital conflict as a dysfunctioning conjugal relationship. It was the interaction between the two spouses that needed to be focused upon and

altered.

TABLE 6  
SETTING WITH MANNER IN WHICH  
FAMILY MEMBERS WERE SEEN

Family Members	Family Service	Child Welfare	Hospital	Welfare
see husband alone	0	0	0	0
see wife alone	0	5	1	1
see husband and wife together	12	17	4	2
see family as a unit	1	2	1	0
other	1	6	1	0
Totals	14	30	77	3

A cross tabulation of level of education and the manner in which clients were seen indicated that 5 out of 16 (31.2 per cent) of the respondents holding a Bachelor of Social Work Degree saw the wife alone. These figures could be compared with 1 out of 23 (4.4 per cent) for persons holding a Master of Social Work Degree and 1 out of 5 (20 per cent) for persons holding a Bachelor of Arts Degree. (see Table 7).

A cross tabulation of years of experience and the manner in which the family members were seen (see Table 8) indicated that 3 out of 19 (15.8 per cent) respondents with up to 2 years experience saw the wife alone and 3 out of 14 (21.4 per cent) respondents with 2 to 4 years experience

saw the wife alone. Only one other respondent (1 out of 2 with more than 15 years experience interviewed the wife alone).

TABLE 7

MANNER IN WHICH FAMILY MEMBERS  
WERE SEEN WITH LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Family Members	MSW	BSW	BA	Other
see wife alone	1	5	1	0
see husband and wife together	20	11	3	1
see family as a unit	2	0	1	1

TABLE 8

MANNER IN WHICH FAMILY MEMBERS  
WERE SEEN WITH YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Family Member	up to 2	2-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	10-15	more than 15
see wife alone	3	3	0	0	0	0	1
see husband and wife together	14	10	1	2	4	3	1
see family as a unit	2	1	1	0	0	0	0

It appeared, therefore, that workers with less than 4 years experience chose to see the wife alone more often than social workers with more than 4 years experience.

In regard to techniques used in counselling couples prior, during, and after the act of marital separation, 22

respondents (47.4 per cent) stated that they utilized the theoretical models as summarized in Table 9. It was noteworthy that the problem solving, crisis intervention, and client centered models were again the most frequently used. The problem solving model, however, was used most consistently throughout the marital separation process. The representativeness of this sample could not, however, be guaranteed.

Eleven workers (13.7 per cent) gave no response to this question.

TABLE 9

THEORETICAL MODELS USED PRIOR TO, DURING AND  
AFTER THE ACT OF MARITAL SEPARATION

Theoretical Models	Prior to #	During #	After #
Problem Solving	9	11	9
Crisis Intervention	7	11	4
Client Centered	4	5	11
Functional	5	4	8
Psychosocial	9	1	3
Transactional Analysis	4	1	2
Group Work	2	1	4
Family Therapy	6	0	0
Behavior Modification	2	0	0

The 21 respondents (38.9 per cent) commenting at some length on the techniques and concepts used prior to, during and after the act of marital separation demonstrated a relatively



high degree of homogeneity.

Although 5 respondents expressed feelings that the marital relationship should be maintained at all cost, 17 of the 21 workers stated that social work intervention prior to the act of marital separation focused on an evaluation of the marriage and the conflict that had developed, an understanding of the persons behind the symptomatic behavior and communication, and an assessment of the appropriateness of marital separation as a solution. A variety of techniques were used to achieve this result. One respondent suggested an assessment session with the entire family. Another suggested using the Adlerian concept of life styles and natural consequences of behavior patterns and social interests. Five respondents reviewed the marriage from the courtship stage to the present, focusing specifically on the qualities of the spouses that were attractive to each other.

Of the respondents, 11 out of 21 focused on communication patterns helping the spouses to explicitly express feelings towards and expectations of each other. One respondent suggested using Gestalt techniques while several others suggested using conjoint family therapy.

Emphasis was also placed on goal-setting by both the spouses and the social worker in establishing explicit actions or thought patterns that would lead to a decision to reconcile or separate. With the positive elements remaining in the relationship used as a foundation, the marital couple was encouraged to work on other areas that were not as whole-some.

Although concern for the children of the spouses was presented as a factor in evaluating the marriage and deciding on a plan of action, the spouses were encouraged to take responsibility for their problematic situation, making decisions that would have the best interests of all concerned at heart.

Although emphasis was placed on expression of feelings, no mention was made of what type of feelings had to be worked through prior to the act of separation. While separation was assumed to be the outcome of a balanced assessment of all the factors involved, the exact relationship between such a decision-making process and the other factors involved in the act (dissociation from spouse, redefinition of parental role, application of appropriate resources) was not discussed.

In describing concepts and techniques used during the act of marital separation, 3 respondents viewed the act of separating itself as a trial from which the spouses could proceed to either a divorce or reconciliation. As such, the worker remained alert for changes in either spouse that would make reconciliation feasible.

The majority of respondents, however, accepted the decision to separate as being appropriate, to be changed only at the request of the marital couple. Counselling during the act of separation focused on resolving the emotional turmoil that the spouses typically undergo. The spouses were helped in dealing with feelings of failure, loss, grief, anger, anomie, loneliness, and inadequacy. Six respondents

wrote of supporting threatened ego functions; another suggested following Kubler-Ross' five stages of mourning.

Counselling during the act of separation, therefore, focused on helping the spouses to adjust to their new role of single person and single parent. The respondents suggested active involvement of the worker in the acquisition of community resources, in communication with the absent spouse regarding common concerns (children), and in reflection and prediction of the feelings involved in the separation process. The spouses needed to know that the feelings currently overwhelming them needed to be acknowledged and expressed as a normal phase of that process. The worker's role as a supportive, knowledgeable, objective counsellor was important to that effect.

Although 3 respondents focused on making the separation of the parents understandable and emotionally acceptable to the children via role playing and parent-child interviews, few workers actually focused on the difficulty of parents and children, who are themselves overwhelmed, meeting each other's needs. One respondent did focus, however, on the need to avoid reconciliation as the easiest solution to a currently overwhelming situation. Three respondents wrote of helping the spouses to carry through on the decisions made earlier.

Concepts and techniques of the respondents used after the act of marital separation focused upon consolidation of the decisions, actions, and changes of the spouses made during

the act of separation. Continued emphasis was placed on resolution of emotional turmoil, adjustment to altered roles and life styles, and appropriate utilization of supportive community resources. Two respondents addressed themselves to the difficult role that a divorced or separated single parent assumed, suggesting that the role itself was a transitional one. Several respondents addressed themselves to helping the spouses overcome the cyclical patterns of inappropriately coping with one crisis by reacting in a manner that led to another crisis.

The provision of concrete resources and services was frequently mentioned by the respondents. These included assistance with legal matters, visiting rights, child care, housing, finances, and recreation. The fostering of renewed friendship between separated spouses was suggested by one respondent as a way to put emotional turmoil at rest.

The concepts and techniques outlined by the respondents appeared to express a greater familiarity with modes of intervention than with the client's situation during the separation process. An outline of the phases or tasks involved in the separation process was not readily apparent. Application of theoretical models, concepts, and techniques varied according to individual social worker and client.

The responses also described situations as experienced by a client, who functioned adequately in other areas of life not directly affected by the marriage relationship. If, however, marital separation or divorce failed to alleviate a

client's distress (i.e. the marital conflict was symptomatic of some more basic dysfunction) a more basic examination of the purpose and appropriateness of a separation or divorce may have been needed. Such an evaluation of the therapeutic limitations of the separation act was not apparent.

When asked who should make the decision to initiate a separation or divorce, 20 (53.7 per cent) respondents indicated that only the marital couple should. Eighteen (33.3 per cent) respondents indicated that the husband and wife individually using the counsel of their personal lawyers and social workers should. One respondent stated that the marital couple should decide using community resources to help them. Eighty-eight point nine percent of the respondents, therefore, indicated that the spouses involved needed to take the full responsibility of deciding on whether or not to initiate a marital separation or divorce. Only 2 respondents thought that the marital couple, social worker, and lawyer together should decide. One other respondent believed that the decision should be made by the marital couple and lawyer together. (see Table 10).

A cross tabulation between the variables of setting and who makes the decision to separate indicated that 4 social workers in the child welfare settings were the only ones to believe that persons other than the marital couple should actually participate in making the decision to separate.

Cross tabulation of level of education and years of experience with the variable of who makes the decision to

TABLE 10

RESPONDENTS OPINION OF WHO SHOULD MAKE THE DECISION  
TO INITIATE A SEPARATION OR A DIVORCE

Possible Participants	#	%	Cumulative Frequency
marital couple, social worker and lawyer together	2	3.7	3.7
marital couple and social worker together	1	1.9	5.6
marital couple and lawyer together	0	0	5.6
husband and wife individually using the counsel of their personal lawyers and social workers	18	33.3	38.9
marital couple using other community resources	1	1.9	40.7
marital couple	29	53.7	94.4
other	3	5.6	100.0

separate yielded no significant results.

It appeared, therefore, that if a marital couple wished to initiate a separation or divorce, they were required by the social workers in the Windsor area to take the initiative in seeking counsel and making the decision. The responsibility for initiating a separation or divorce was left entirely with the marital couple.

When asked who was most likely to remain in counselling after the decision to separate had been made, 7 (14.6 per cent) of the respondents indicated that both husband and wife

were most likely to remain, and 41 (85.4 per cent) stated that the wife was most likely to remain. None of the respondents indicated that the husband was most likely to remain in counselling. Four respondents failed to answer the question and 2 respondents from a child welfare setting stated that the spouse having custody of the children was most likely to remain in counselling.

A cross tabulation of who was most likely to remain in counselling after the decision to separate had been made and the setting of the social worker indicated that all the social workers in the community and social services setting thought that the wife was most likely to remain. In the family service setting 9 (75 per cent) and in the hospital setting 5 (71.4 per cent) of the workers thought the wife was most likely to remain. In the child welfare setting 24 out of 26 (92.3 per cent) of the social workers thought that the wife only would seek further counselling.

Each respondent was asked which community resources he or she used most often in helping clients to establish an existence independent of their spouses.

Table 11 lists the community resources that were used most often by the various respondents in referring their clients. Although the resources were ranked in approximate order of frequency with which they were utilized, Welfare Services, Parents Without Partners, Windsor Housing Authority, Legal Services, and Manpower retraining services were quite distinguishable from the other resources which were less

frequently mentioned.

TABLE 11  
COMMUNITY RESOURCES USED

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Welfare or Family Benefits  
 Parents without Partners  
 Windsor Housing  
 Legal Aid or Legal Assistance of Windsor  
 Manpower or St. Clair College (retraining)  
 Family Service Bureaus  
 Children's Aid Societies  
 Salvation Army, St. Vincent de Paul, or Red Cross  
 Day Care or Nursery  
 YMCA, YWCA  
 Credit Counselling  
 Local Churches  
 Family Court  
 Action Centers or Recreational Groups  
 Women's Place  
 Addiction Research Foundation  
 Connaught Clinic  
 Big Brothers or Big Sisters  
 Camps  
 Adjustment to Divorce Course  
 Extended Family  
 Homemaker Services  
 Psychiatric Services  
 Private Physicians or Lawyers

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Attitudes and Perceptions of Respondents  
 Regarding Marital Separation

In Part III of the questionnaire each of the respondents was asked to rate 17 statements on a scale of 1 to 5 that



reflected their level of agreement or disagreement. Table 12 summarizes the responses that were given.

Initial attempts at describing systematic association between all the statements were not successful. Ranking of the statements according to median coincided with ranking according to mode but not with ranking according to mean. The percentage of observations that were "undecided" fluctuated from statement to statement, thereby affecting the ranking of the percentage of respondents that were in agreement or disagreement.

Examination of the medians and modes of all the statements, however, indicated that only 2 statements were predominantly disagreed with. One statement had the undecided category as the mode. A majority of the respondents either disagreed with or were undecided about the statements "When they separate most spouses are too upset emotionally to develop or follow a rational plan of action" and "Marital separation or divorce is merely a remedy to an otherwise impossible situation." Thirty seven percent of the respondents disagreed and 42.6 per cent of the respondents (total 79.6 per cent) were undecided about the statement "Treatment outcomes are consistently less favourable for couples with marital problems as opposed to couples with problems not specifically related to the marital relationship."

Examination of Table 12 indicates that the respondents placed heavy emphasis on the stress surrounding marital separation and the divorce, the difficulty of separating the

TABLE 12

## ATTITUDES OF SOCIAL WORKERS REGARDING MARITAL SEPARATION

State- ment #	Statement	strongly agree #	%	agree #	%	undecided #	%	disagree #	%	strongly disagree #	%	Rank	Median
06	Marital separation and divorce can be considered to be one of the most stressful events in a person's life	23	42.6	25	46.3	1	1.9	4	7.4	1	1.9	1	4.340
14	Marital separation or divorce is complicated by the fact that while the marriage is terminated the parental role continues	17	31.5	37	68.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	4.230
16	Social work education should place greater emphasis on understanding and meeting the needs of spouses and families in the process of separation or divorce	13	24.1	38	70.4	3	5.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	4.132
15	Society has not developed mechanisms, responses or rituals to cope with divorce humanely or practically	12	22.2	33	61.1	7	13.0	1	1.9	1	1.9	4	4.045

TABLE 12 - continued

State- ment #	Statement	strongly agree #	agree %	undecided #	undecided %	disagree #	disagree %	strongly disagree #	Rank	Median			
02	Collaboration between social workers and lawyers on cases of marital breakdown is beneficial to the clients involved	13	24.1	29	53.7	11	20.4	1	1.9	0	0.0	5	4.017
17	Literature on marital counselling and divorce procedures remains geared to the needs and characteristics of middle class clients	8	14.8	36	66.7	8	14.8	2	3.7	0	0.0	6	3.972
01	Divorce is being increasingly accepted by the social work profession as an appropriate solution to marital breakdown	7	13.0	35	64.8	4	7.4	7	13.0	1	1.9	7	3.929
08	The marriage relationship is one of the few relationships in which people expect to be loved and accepted as themselves	11	20.4	27	50.0	4	7.4	11	20.4	1	1.9	8	3.907
12	Spouses usually do not seek professional support in coping with the emotional crisis of separation	4	7.4	34	63.0	10	18.5	6	11.1	0	1.0	9	3.824

TABLE 12 - continued

State- ment #	Statement	strongly agree #	%	agree #	%	undecided #	%	disagree #	%	strongly disagree #	%	Rank	Median
13	Expectations of one's spouse and marital relationship vary according to a person's socio-economic class	5	9.3	32	59.3	7	13.0	9	16.7	1	1.9	10	3.813
11	Although marital conflict may intensify over a period of time; the act of physical separation is usually precipitated by a single specific event	5	9.3	28	51.9	6	11.1	14	25.9	1	1.9	11	3.714
09	The constantly changing male-female role expectation is a key factor contributing to distress in marriages today	8	14.8	24	44.4	14	25.9	8	14.8	0	0.0	12	3.708
07	Current methods of social work intervention facilitate successful resolution of the emotional crisis of marital separation	3	5.6	25	46.3	17	31.5	8	14.8	1	1.9	13	3.540
04	Social work practice has been hesitant about guiding couples through the separation process	2	3.7	25	46.3	8	14.8	16	29.6	3	5.6	14	3.500

TABLE 12 - continued

State- ment #	Statement	strongly agree #	%	agree #	%	undecided #	%	disagree #	%	strongly disagree #	Rank	Median	
10	Treatment outcomes are consistently less favorable for couples with marital problems as opposed to couples with problems not specifically related to the marital relationship	1	1.9	10	18.5	23	42.6	18	33.3	2	3.7	15	2.804
03	When they separate, most spouses are too emotionally upset to develop or follow a rational plan of action	2	3.7	16	29.6	12	22.2	23	42.6	1	1.9	16	2.750
05	Marital separation or divorce is merely a remedy to an otherwise impossible situation	2	3.7	15	27.8	12	22.2	22	40.7	3	5.6	17	2.667

conjugal role from the parental role, the need of social work education to emphasize understanding of the needs of persons undergoing the separation process, and the lack of societal mechanisms, responses or rituals to cope with divorce humanely or practically. Collaboration between social workers and lawyers on cases of marital breakdown may have been agreed with because it helped the client to cope more effectively with those issues.

Use of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation indicated measures of association between the statements listed in Table 13. Examination of each pair of statements indicated that the thoughts expressed by the two statements were related. Use of the statistic Kendall's Tau to test relations between the statements under discussion and the variable (years of experience) indicated a small measure of association of less than .25.

Use of Wilcoxon's Coefficient of Differentiation (theta) to test relations between the attitudinal statements and the variables setting, level of education, and religious perspective of agency, indicated a value for theta of  $-.431$  between "religion" and the statement referring to emotional upset during the separation process (statement 3), a value of  $+379$  between "religion" and the statement referring to the efficacy of current methods of social work intervention (statement 7), a value of  $-.372$  between "religion" and the statement referring to the failure of spouses to seek professional support in coping with the emotional crisis of

TABLE 13

STATEMENTS WITH A CORRELATION GREATER THAN .4

Statement	Statement	Pearson Product Moment Correla- tion Coefficient
The constantly changing male-female role expectations is a key factor contributing to distress in marriage today	Expectations of one's spouse and marital relationship vary according to a person's socio-economic class	.4474
When they separate most spouses are too upset emotionally to develop or follow a rational plan of action	Spouses usually do not seek professional support in coping with the emotional crisis of separation	.4310
Society has not developed mechanisms, responses or rituals to cope with divorce humanely or practically	Social work education should place greater emphasis on understanding and meeting the needs of spouses and families in process of separation or divorce	.4230

separation (statement 12), and a value of  $-.368$  between "religion" and the statement describing marital separation or divorce as only a remedy to an otherwise impossible situation. (Statement 5).<sup>182</sup>

<sup>182</sup>As in Pearson's Product moment correlation, Kendall's Tau, and Lambda, a value of  $-1$  for theta describes a perfect negative association. As "religion" moves from (1) non sectarian to (2) Roman Catholic the response to the attitudinal statement moves from (5) strongly agree to (1) strongly disagree. A value of  $+1$  describes a perfect positive association. As "religion" moves from (1) non sectarian to (2) Roman Catholic the response to the attitudinal statement moves from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. A value of  $0$  describes the absence of a relation between the two variables.

Workers in the Roman Catholic Agencies tended to disagree and workers in the non sectarian agencies tended to agree with statement 3 (emotional upset during separation).

Workers in both the Roman Catholic and the non sectarian agencies tended to agree with statement 7 (efficacy of social work intervention in marital separation). Workers in the Roman Catholic agency tended to equivocate between agreeing and disagreeing, while workers in the non sectarian agency persistently agreed with statement 12 (spouses usually do not seek professional support).

Finally, workers in the non sectarian agency tended to agree more persistently than workers in the Roman Catholic Agency with statement 5 (marital separation as merely a remedy).

Although the degree of association was not pronounced, the relation between the religious perspective of the Agency and the marital separation counselling services given could warrant further examination.

Caution should be taken, however, in interpreting the above statements. The variable "religious perspective of your agency" was specific in that it referred to agency policies, procedures, and services directly influenced by religion. The degree to which each respondent identified with the religious perspective of his or her agency, however was not tested.



## Generalized Comments

In Part IV of the questionnaire the respondents were given the opportunity to outline what they considered to be crucial factors in helping spouses achieve a successful marital separation or divorce. Ten (18.5 per cent) of the workers gave no comments. Four (7.4 per cent) of the respondents indicated that marital separation or divorce was not usually an appropriate solution to prolonged, severe marital conflict. Seven respondents (13 per cent) stated that marital separation or divorce was an imperfect solution to an impossible situation. None of the respondents encouraged the initiation of a separation before serious attempts at reconciliation had been made. The majority of respondents, however, (61.1 per cent) did assume that marital separation or divorce could free spouses and children from a destructive relationship so that a new and more fulfilling life style and home environment could be established.

None of the respondents indicated what criteria would make marital separation or divorce the most appropriate solution to a pathological marital relationship. Five respondents, (9.3 per cent), however did specify various factors that would make the separation process more difficult. These factors included (1) the desire of only one spouse to separate, (2) financial and vocational independence of both spouses, (3) involvement of a third party in the marriage, (4) number of years married, (5) amount of property to re-

distribute, (6) age of marital couple, (7) extent of problem (i.e. healthiness or sickness of the relationship), and (8) involvement or lack of it of the children in the marital conflict.

Most of the social workers focused on the importance of realistically deciding whether or not reconciliation could be achieved, whether or not reconciliation was desired by the spouses, whether or not the spouses wanted to cope with the conflict without acquiring a separation or divorce, and the probability of separation positively altering the lives of the spouses and children involved. Separation was not considered to be the most appropriate plan of action for all spouses suffering chronic marital conflict.

The initial stages of social work involvement were concerned with assessment and evaluation of the relationship; recognition, expression and understanding of feelings so that relationships and situations could be viewed more objectively; preparation, if necessary, for alteration of roles caused by separation; and remedial support through the use of community resources. Three workers suggested a temporary separation for purposes of assessment and evaluation. Two others suggested machinery (e.g. agreements, contracts) to help the spouses carry through on an established plan.

The respondents suggested that once the decision to separate has been made, the emphasis of social work intervention should be on making the separation process as smooth as possible. Although the focus remained on resolution of

difficulties, the respondents suggested awareness and prevention of incidents that impede social functioning. Specific factors frequently causing concern included financial matters, visiting rights, social activities, and adverse involvement of extended family.

Most respondents implied that marital separation counselling involved itself with the emotional crisis associated with roles, relationships, or life styles. As was previously stated, emphasis on expression of pent-up feelings, on realistic execution of concrete housekeeping tasks, and on appropriate use of community resources remains the norm.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY

This research study investigated the modes of intervention social workers in a variety of settings in the Windsor area found to be most effective in working with marital separation. Despite the rising number of marital separations and divorces, little or no empirical research regarding the effectiveness of social work intervention in the marital separation process has been conducted.

Realizing that we were still in a state of problem formulation, it was felt that an extensive review of the literature on the marital separation process and modes of social work intervention, as well as an assessment of Windsor's social workers' attitudes towards and involvement in counselling separating spouses, would contribute to current understanding of the topic. We also felt that certain results of our research could be developed into hypotheses for future research.

To accomplish the purposes of our study we outlined in the Review of the Literature the changing trends in marital and family life, the sociological and psychological factors contributing to marital breakdown, the separation process, the basic modes of social work intervention, as well as the

changing trends and issues of social work's involvement in situations of marital conflict and dissolution.

Our Review of the Literature indicated that the increasing demands and pressures of society placed upon the modern family and its subsequent adaptations to those pressures have contributed to the increase in marital separations. Specific sociological and psychological factors affecting marital stability have been researched quite extensively. Our review of the social work literature, however, revealed a lack of emphasis on theoretical and empirical aspects of the marital separation process.

Based on the scant information available, we outlined the separation process in the context of crisis theory. Categorized as an unanticipated or situational crisis, marital separation was viewed as a process with a potential of either promoting or stifling mental growth, depending upon the internal and external support available during its active phase. A discussion of the profession's past and current involvement in counselling spouses experiencing marital conflict and dissolution was based upon the overview of pertinent modes of social work intervention. Our review of the literature on current research into the expertise of the social work profession in marriage counselling, while inadequate, has indicated that social workers are fairly effective in counselling middle-class spouses but relatively ineffective in counselling spouses from the lower-class. While research on the effectiveness of marriage counselling appears biased in

favour of keeping marriages together, recent trends in social work intervention towards separation and divorce counselling indicate that the profession is attempting to adapt to the changing needs of marital couples.

Current modes of intervention designed to help couples work through the crisis of marital separation emphasize trial separations, assistance to spouses in working through specific emotional phases of the crisis, collaboration between social worker and lawyer, and the importance of appropriate social worker attitudes and values in helping spouses decide whether or not to separate.

The present study, therefore, sought to expand on the review of the literature on marital separation counselling by surveying the theoretical orientations, practice methods, and attitudes of Windsor's social workers involved with assisting separating spouses.

The response to the questionnaire was found to be representative of the potential population of the study. Social workers from all settings were adequately represented.

The researchers found that although the variables, setting, religious perspective of the agency, level of education, years of practice, years of experience, and number of cases actually worked with were all important variables describing the worker's practice, no significant degree of association was found between any of these variables except the variables years of practice and years of experience. The above mentioned variables indicated a combined

correlation with the data presented on theoretical orientations, practice methods, and attitudes. The only direct binary association worthy of consideration was between the variables religious perspective of the agency and statements 3, 5, 7 and 12 in Part III (attitudes).

In regard to the theoretical orientation of the social workers, the crisis intervention, problem solving, and client centered models were utilized most frequently while behavior modification and group work were used least frequently. The psychosocial model appeared to be used about as frequently as it was used infrequently. The family therapy and functional models were used more frequently than infrequently. A large majority of the respondents (76.1 per cent) saw the husband and wife together. Only 15.2 per cent saw the wife alone while no respondents saw the husband alone.

Regarding concepts and techniques used prior to the act of marital separation, a majority of the workers stressed helping the spouses to assess their past and current marital situation. This involved reflection on and expression of feelings, examination of communication and behavior patterns, and assessment of psychological and sociological dysfunctioning of individual spouses. Evaluation of the above factors led to a decision on whether or not reconciliation was possible. If separation was the only appropriate solution, preparation for the actual separation event was encouraged, using community resources where possible.

Concerning concepts and techniques used during the act

of separation, the respondents focused on helping the spouses follow through on the decision that they had made. Specifically, this included facilitating expression of feelings of anger, loneliness, inadequacy, isolation, and confusion, helping the spouses to understand that these reactions are a normal phase of the separation process. Specific concern for the enlightenment and care of the children, so that they would not become pawns in the marital conflict, was expressed. Use of community resources was crucial, as the ability of both spouses to adequately cope with all the implications of separation was a real concern.

Regarding concepts and techniques used after the act of separation, the respondents focused on consolidation and stabilization of changes made during the act of separation. Specifically, this included resolution of the emotional crisis, utilization of appropriate community resources, facilitation of visiting arrangements and legal matters, adjustment to the role of single or absent parent, and development of accepting social contacts.

Various respondents expressed the belief that the marriage should be preserved at all costs. In such cases most of the social work intervention was focused on reconciliation. Several others saw separation and divorce as a transitional stage and encouraged the separated spouses to seek new alliances with other men or women.

Of the respondents, 53.7 per cent believed that the marital couple only should make the decision to separate. A



further 33.3 per cent encouraged consultation with personal lawyers or social workers before making the decision to separate.

Of the respondents, 85 per cent believed that the wife was most likely to remain in counselling after the decision to separate had been made. The remaining 14.6 per cent believed that both husband and wife would remain.

Regarding community resources used most often in helping clients establish an existence independent of their spouses, a comprehensive list of all of Windsor's community resources was offered. Major emphasis, however, was placed on Welfare services, Parents without Partners, Ontario Housing services, legal services, and Manpower retraining programs.

Part III of the questionnaire on attitudes indicated that all but 3 of the statements were predominantly agreed with. Major emphasis, however, was on the stress involved in marital separation, the difficulty of separating the conjugal role from the parental role, the lack of emphasis in social work education on the needs of separating spouses, and the lack of societal mechanisms, responses, or rituals to deal humanely with divorce.

General response to all of the 17 attitudinal statements was consistent with our review of the literature. No outstanding discrepancy was found between response to any of the statements and the writings to which they refer.

The final section of the questionnaire, giving social

workers opportunity to outline what they considered to be crucial factors in helping spouses achieve a successful marital separation or divorce, yielded a variety of responses. A small number of respondents believed that separation or divorce was not an appropriate solution to irreconcilable marital conflict. A majority of workers, however, focused on helping the client achieve appropriate expression, acceptance, and understanding of feelings engendered by the conflict and separation, and on helping the client to objectively understand the factors involved in the crisis and to make decisions accordingly. Specific focus was placed on helping the client to alter behavior, re-adjust roles, and establish a situation that could foster health and growth for all concerned.

Consistent with our review of the literature, was the fact that the respondents demonstrated greater understanding of the methods of social work intervention than of the separation process itself or of the needs of the client who undergoes it. No new concepts, techniques, or theoretical formulations concerning marital separation counselling were forthcoming from the study population.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSTON AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As was stated in chapter III (Methodology), each research study has specific limitations that affect its validity and reliability. The limitations of this study were (1) scarcity of literature on marital separation counselling, (2) restrictions on available time to complete the study, (3) difficulty systematically locating a sample of knowledgeable workers involved in marital separation counselling, (4) difficulty in developing a simple but valid and reliable data collection instrument.

We also experienced some difficulty in interpreting and reporting on the data that was collected. Although numbers of observations and percentages were easily recorded, the meaning of such observations and the extent to which they could be generalized was not so readily established. Caution should, therefore, be taken to avoid drawing conclusions that are beyond the scope of this exploratory study. Such caution is especially appropriate in interpreting responses to the open ended questions on concepts and techniques used before, during, and after the act of separation and to comments on crucial factors leading to a successful separation.

With the above statements taken into consideration, we

concluded that the majority of social workers in all the settings included in this study, reported active involvement in assisting spouses undergoing marital separation. Differences in theoretical models, practice methods, and attitudes among social workers in various settings and with differing levels of education, years of practice, and years of experience in marital separation counselling were not readily evident. Knowledge and use of social work literature in a generic manner predominated. Knowledge of the marital separation process applied to specific modes of marital separation counselling was less evident. No new concepts, techniques or practice methods regarding separation counselling were forthcoming from the study population.

We concluded, therefore, that social work intervention in the process of marital separation appeared to utilize established theoretical treatment models and practice methods to alleviate or remedy the client's problems and distress as the individual social worker perceived them. More comprehensive and extensive knowledge of the separation process and the emotional crisis that most spouses undergo during the separation process could make the application of social work intervention at such a time more effective. Responses to the variables of who should make the decision to separate, who should be interviewed, and who remains in counselling after the decision to separate has been made, indicated a need to actively research and develop a deeper understanding of modes of intervention for helping both the spouses involved in the

marital separation process. Responses to questions on the appropriateness of marital separation or divorce as a solution to chronic marital conflict, indicated that the social workers generally believed that separation was acceptable if and, only if, the pathological relationship was not amenable to treatment. The respondents appeared to be aware of and somewhat apprehensive of the implications of marital separation or divorce, emphasizing the difficulty of coping with dramatic role changes and emotional turmoil.

We felt, therefore, that social work intervention in marital separation continued to respect the client's self determination in coping with a relationship that thwarted, rather than enhanced, mental health. Given the controversy over the appropriateness and effectiveness of marital separation and divorce as a solution to chronic marital conflict, one can understand the respondents' apprehension in actively advocating such a process.

The reasons for marital breakdown and separation are diverse. Many of those reasons are beyond social work's ability to alter effectively in order to salvage individual marriages. A thorough understanding of the marital couple's problematic situation before, during, and after what appears to be an unavoidable separation may help to prevent the development of further pathological situations.

We, the researchers, would recommend further study of the specific needs of marital couples undergoing marital separation. More specifically, we would recommend

(1) Further investigation of the specific factors leading to marital separation (i.e. what specific factors lead to the dissolution of one pathological marriage while another remains intact)

(2) Investigation of the exact nature of social work intervention that would be most helpful to the separating spouses (i.e. in what ways do separating spouses feel that social work intervention could help them during the separation process)

(3) Further investigation of the specific phases of the marital separation process (i.e. application of writings by Kubler Ross and Bowlby)

This study has begun an exploration of social work's intervention in marital separation. Social work's modes of intervention have been reviewed. Social worker's perceptions of their practice has been surveyed. Study of other aspects of marital separation, outlined above, continues to be a necessity if social work intervention in the marital separation process is to be effective.

APPENDIX 1



## UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR

WINDSOR, ONTARIO N9B 3P4

TELEPHONE: AREA CODE 519  
253-4232

Martin den Haan and Mary Ellen Frederick,  
Master of Social Work Students,  
University of Windsor,  
January 27, 1975.

Dear

As two students in the candidate year of the Master of Social Work Program, we are attempting to complete a research project dealing with social work intervention in the process of marital separation. More specifically, being aware of the high incidence of marital separation and divorce among clients seeking assistance at Family Service and Child Welfare Agencies, we would like to learn:

- a) What theories and models of intervention are available to, and used by social workers assisting spouses who are contemplating separation?
- b) Should the spouses decide to separate, how many of them remain in counselling until a positive resolution of the marital conflict has been achieved?
- c) What factors, if any, make counselling of separating spouses difficult?

In order to acquire objective information to the above questions, we would like to invite social workers from Windsor's Family Service Agencies and Children's Aid Societies to voluntarily complete a questionnaire that we have developed. We are hoping that your agency will be able to endorse our project and that its results will be of significance to you.

Should you wish to discuss the purpose and operational steps of our project with us further we would be interested in meeting with you.

Thank you in advance for considering and responding to our request.

Sincerely,

Martin den Haan

Mary Ellen Frederick



APPENDIX 2



# UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR

WINDSOR, ONTARIO N9B 3P4

TELEPHONE: AREA CODE 519  
253-4232

Martin den Haan  
Mary Ellen Frederick  
Master of Social Work Candidates  
University of Windsor  
April 25, 1975

Dear Social Worker:

While working in child welfare and family service agencies, each of us has become increasingly aware of the implications of marital separation and divorce upon the futures of the couples and families experiencing it. We have learned that marital separation or divorce can lead either to a successful resolution of chronic marital conflict or to an escalation of personal and familial turmoil.

We are, therefore, eager to learn in what ways social work practice helps marital couples and their children through the crisis that they experience at the time of separation. We wish to study (a) the theoretical orientations used, (b) the practice methods developed, and (c) the values followed by social workers in helping such couples resolve the conflicts that are part of the separation process.

We are aware of the fact that marital separation and divorce counselling is a recently developed area of practice. We are not assuming that every social worker should have a high level of experience and competence in this area.

We do believe, however, that most social workers practising in child welfare and family service agencies encounter couples in the process of marital separation. We hope that you will share your experience in this field with us by completing the enclosed questionnaire and returning it to us by May 23, 1975. Should you wish to read about our findings, a summary will be sent to your agency upon completion of the study. We hope it will be of interest to you.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Martin den Haan

Mary Ellen Frederick

PART I EXPERIENTIAL BACKGROUND

## 1. Setting of your current social work practice:

- a) Family Service \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Child Welfare \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Other, specify \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Religious perspective of your agency:

- a) Non sectarian \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Roman Catholic \_\_\_\_\_

## 3. Level of education:

- a) M.S.W. \_\_\_\_\_
- b) B.S.W. \_\_\_\_\_
- c) B.A., major \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Community College \_\_\_\_\_
- e) Other, specify \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. Years of practice in a social work setting:

- a) up to 2 years \_\_\_\_\_
- b) 2 to 4 years \_\_\_\_\_
- c) 5 to 6 years \_\_\_\_\_
- d) 7 to 8 years \_\_\_\_\_
- e) 9 to 10 years \_\_\_\_\_
- f) 11 to 15 years \_\_\_\_\_
- g) more than 15 years \_\_\_\_\_

## 5. Years of experience in working with marital separation or divorce:

- a) up to 2 years \_\_\_\_\_
- b) 2 to 4 years \_\_\_\_\_
- c) 5 to 6 years \_\_\_\_\_
- d) 7 to 8 years \_\_\_\_\_
- e) 9 to 10 years \_\_\_\_\_
- f) 11 to 15 years \_\_\_\_\_
- g) more than 15 years \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. Number of cases involving marital separation counselling that you have worked with \_\_\_\_\_

PART II THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

1. Please rate the various models outlined below according to how frequently they are used in your practice.

- 1 - VERY INFREQUENTLY
- 2 - INFREQUENTLY
- 3 - UNABLE TO RATE
- 4 - FREQUENTLY
- 5 - VERY FREQUENTLY

- a) PSYCHOSOCIAL MODEL - focuses on the worker obtaining a comprehensive social history of the client in his situation, deriving an accurate diagnosis from it and proceeding, with the client, to develop a tailor-made treatment plan.
- b) PROBLEM-SOLVING MODEL - focuses on helping the client develop problem-solving skills that enable him to accurately define his problem, assess the personal and community resources available to him, and proceed to take effective action toward the solution of his difficulties.
- c) CRISIS INTERVENTION - focuses on helping a client in distress come to grips with his feelings and the situation in which he finds himself and then to develop new patterns of functioning that will help him overcome his stressful situation.
- d) GROUPWORK - focuses on the therapeutic use of groups to help members gain concrete experience in self awareness and new patterns of behavior. The group becomes a microcosm in which the members are free to correct unrewarding modes of relating to others.
- e) BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION - focuses on defining identifiable behaviors which the client wishes to have modified. Positive behaviors are reinforced; negative ones are extinguished so that the relationship between the client and his social environment can be enhanced.
- f) FAMILY THERAPY - focuses on helping members of a family unit assess and modify their dysfunctional patterns of relating to each other.

- g) TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS - focuses on helping clients to analyze transactions and understand the underlying psychodynamics so that they are able to alter their mode of relating to others and move into an "I'm O.K. - You're O.K." position. \_\_\_\_\_
- h) CLIENT CENTRED - focuses on helping the client to fully reflect on and experience his feelings in the here and now so that he is freed to gain new insights into his behavior and develop new ways of coping with his problem. \_\_\_\_\_
- i) FUNCTIONAL APPROACH - focuses on defining and mediating between the needs of the client and the services and resources of the agency so that the functioning of both can be enhanced. \_\_\_\_\_
- j) OTHER, specify \_\_\_\_\_
2. How do you most typically interview the family members regarding the marital conflict prior to the act of marital separation? Please check one.
- a) See husband alone \_\_\_\_\_
- b) See wife alone \_\_\_\_\_
- c) See husband and wife together \_\_\_\_\_
- d) See the family as a unit \_\_\_\_\_
3. Which techniques and concepts do you find particularly useful in counselling couples? ;
- a) prior to the act of marital separation.
- b) during the act of marital separation.
- c) after the act of marital separation.

4. Should separation or divorce seem advisable, who, in your opinion, should make the decision? Please check one.
- a) Marital couple, social worker and lawyer together. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) Marital couple and social worker together. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c) Marital couple and lawyer together. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d) Husband and wife individually, using the counsel of their personal lawyers and social workers. \_\_\_\_\_
  - e) Marital couple using other community resources. \_\_\_\_\_
  - f) Other, specify \_\_\_\_\_
5. Who is most likely to remain in counselling after the decision to separate has been made? Please check one.
- a) Both husband and wife \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) Husband \_\_\_\_\_
  - c) Wife \_\_\_\_\_
6. Which community resources do you use most often in helping your clients establish an existence independent of their spouses?

Please read the following statements and rate them on the scale provided.

	strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	strongly disagree
1. Divorce is being increasingly accepted by the social work profession as an appropriate solution to marital breakdown.	—	—	—	—	—
2. Collaboration between social workers and lawyers on cases of marital breakdown is beneficial to the clients involved.	—	—	—	—	—
3. When they separate, most spouses are too upset emotionally to develop or follow a rational plan of action.	—	—	—	—	—
4. Social work practice has been hesitant about guiding marital couples through the separation process.	—	—	—	—	—
5. Marital separation or divorce is merely a remedy to an otherwise impossible situation.	—	—	—	—	—
6. Marital separation and divorce can be considered to be one of the most stressful events in a person's life.	—	—	—	—	—

agree undecided disagree strongly disagree

7. Current methods of social work intervention facilitate successful resolution of the emotional crisis of marital separation.
8. The marriage relationship is one of the few relationships in which people expect to be loved and accepted as themselves.
9. The constantly changing male-female role expectation is a key factor contributing to distress in marriages today.
10. Treatment outcomes are consistently less favorable for couples with marital problems as opposed to couples with problems not specifically related to the marital relationship.
11. Although marital conflict may intensify over a period of time, the act of physical separation is usually precipitated by a single, specific event.



	strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	strongly disagree
12. Spouses usually do not seek professional support in coping with the emotional crisis of separation.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
13. Expectation of one's spouse and marital relationship vary according to a person's socio-economic class.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
14. Marital separation or divorce is complicated by the fact that while the marriage is terminated, the parental role continues.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
15. Society has not developed mechanisms, responses or rituals to cope with divorce humanely or practically.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
16. Social work education should place greater emphasis on understanding and meeting the needs of spouses and families in the process of separation or divorce.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
17. Literature on marital counselling and divorce procedures remains geared to the needs and characteristics of middle class clients.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

PART IV

1. In the space below, please outline what you consider to be crucial factors in helping spouses achieve a successful marital separation or divorce.

APPENDIX 3

## SETTING OF RESPONDENT WITH THEIR LEVEL OF EDUCATION.

Setting	MSW		BSW		BA		Other	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Family Service	10	71.4	2	14.5	0	0	2	14.3
Child Welfare	12	40.0	12	40.0	6	20.0	0	0
Hospital	6	85.7	1	14.3	0	0	0	0
Welfare	1	33.3	2	66.6	0	0	0	0

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VITAE

## VITA

Martin, den Haan was born in Rijswijk, The Netherlands on October 5, 1944. In 1950, his parents and family immigrated to Canada and settled on a farm in Simcoe County, Ontario. He received his primary education at S. S. Number 9, a one room public school in Adjala Township, and his secondary education at Banting Memorial High School, Alliston. In 1967 he enrolled at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Illinois from where he received his Bachelor of Arts Degree in 1971. On August 19, 1971 Martin married Bertä Troelstra and moved to Drayton, Ontario, where he gained employment with the Children's Aid Society of Wellington County. In July 1973 he enrolled at the University of Windsor, receiving his Bachelor of Social Work degree in May, 1974. After a happy summer during which his daughter, Elena Alice was born, he enrolled in the Master of Social Work program.



#### VITA

Mary Ellen Frederick (nee Howe) was born in Windsor, Ontario on June 11, 1951. She obtained her elementary education at Southwood School, Windsor, Ontario. Her secondary education was completed in 1969 at Vincent Massey Secondary School, Windsor, Ontario. She then attended the University of Windsor and in 1973 received her Bachelor of Social Work degree. In her final year of the undergraduate social work degree programme her field placement was with the Windsor School Board, Windsor, Ontario.

In June 1973 she accepted employment with the City of Windsor's Social Service Department and was married in November 1973 to John Frederick. Mrs. Frederick left the employ of the City of Windsor in August 1974 to enter into the Master of Social Work programme at the University of Windsor and expects to graduate in October, 1975. Her field placement during the M.S.W. candidate year was with the Roman Catholic Children's Aid Society, Windsor, Ontario.